

HIGHLAND COUSINS

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HIGHLAND COUSINS

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BY

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"A PRINCESS OF THULE," "MACLEOD OF DARE," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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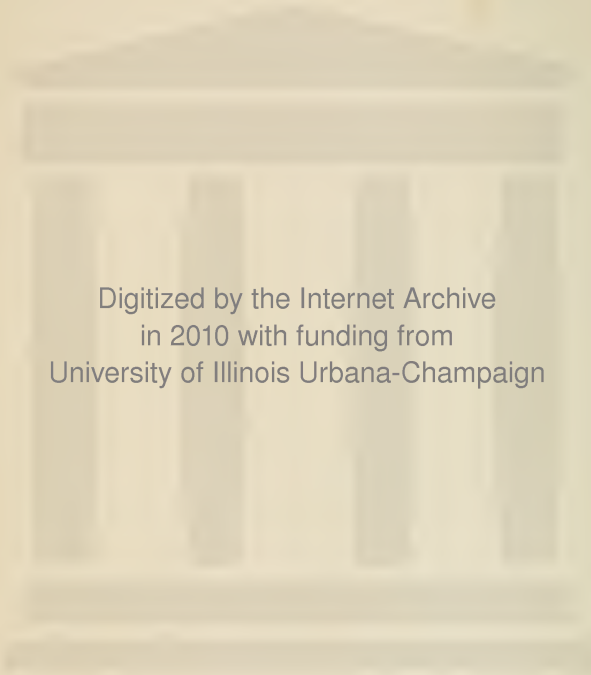
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HIGHLAND COUSINS.



CHAPTER I.

ON A SUMMER'S EVENING.

To no one was the great news more welcome than to the councillor, who saw in it but another step towards the realisation of his own far-reaching schemes. And to celebrate the event, and perhaps—for certain dark reasons—to familiarise Jess with the spectacle of a pair of affianced lovers, he came bustling along on the following afternoon, and would have the schoolmaster and the two girls go away with him for a sail in Angus MacIsaac's boat, the *Kelpie*. There was a fine brisk breeze blowing; they would adventure out into the golden regions of the west; and the clear twilight would bring them home.

Well, there was nothing of the spoil-sport about Jess Maclean : if, on some rare occasion, the ‘foolishness’ got hold of her, then she took care to hide herself away in solitude. Moreover these were Allan’s holidays ; and during the working times of the year there was little enough diversion for him. So Jess at once and cheerfully put on her smartest things ; Barbara did the same ; the school-master was summoned ; and the councillor, having marshalled his forces, proceeded to escort them down to the sea-front. He was in the noblest of spirits ; it was as if he were leading them on to the conquest of Mexico or the capture of the last of the Incas.

Unfortunately, when they reached the esplanade, they found that the *Kelpie* was away somewhere, and Angus with her ; but there was an alternative cutter, the *Osprey*, lying at her moorings ; and MacIsaac’s representative, a young lad named Malcolm, was on the beach. To do this youth justice, he seemed to hesitate a little about the responsibility of letting the boat ; but Mr. McFadyen, in his stormily heroic mood, would take no refusal.

“ You’ll come with us, man,” he exclaimed, “ and at least ye know how to manage the

things at the bow. I'll do the rest; we'll get on splendid; anybody can sail a boat on a fine summer evening like this. Oh, I know something about a boat—I've kept my eyes open—you'll see we'll just get on splendid."

He would have no hanging back; he carried everything before him; he had himself and his companions pulled out in a dingy; they got on board; and the councillor straightway took up his post at the tiller. Columbus, calm and resolved in face of his insurgent followers, could not have looked more imposing. It is true he regarded the movements of the youth Malcolm with a curiosity not unmingled with impatience; for, the commander being at the helm, why was nothing going forward—why was not the vessel making response? But at length Malcolm got the little half-decked cutter slipped from her moorings; and she began to creep slowly away before the wind.

It was an altogether auspicious setting-out; for although there was a stormy look about the skies—the 'sun had set up his backstays' over the western hills, the spreading rays of light striking downwards from the moving clouds—there was nothing to denote that the breeze would remain otherwise than

benign and steady: the prospect was that after a pleasant run through the wild sunset-fires they would come gliding back through the still more wonderful afterglow, to walk homeward in the pearly dusk. There was at this starting only one little mischance.

"Am I trusting my life to you, Mr. McFadyen?" Jess happened to say, blithely, as she made herself a snug seat in the cockpit.

"Ay, Miss Jessie," he answered her, "I wish ye would do that for altogether."

But the confusion caused by this inadvertent remark was only momentary; Jess pretended to have heard nothing; while Peter McFadyen was now, and rather angrily, trying to make out what the youth Malcolm meant by certain bashfully-suggested hints.

"Will I haul up the main tack, sir?"

"What's that ye say?"

"Will I haul up the main tack?"

"Oh, we're doing well enough—we're doing fine!" said Peter, fretfully—of course he did not like being interrupted in his task of entertaining his companions.

Nevertheless the youth—shy and diffident as he was—would still interfere. He came aft.

"Will I slack out the boom a bit more, sir?"

"We're doing fine—we're doing fine, I tell ye!" retorted Peter with obvious irritability. "You go and attend to the things at the bow; I'll manage the rest."

Malcolm was a biddable lad. He went forward again. He only ventured to say, as he stood by the mast—

"Will I hoist the foresail, sir?"

"What?" bawled Peter.

"Will I hoist the foresail?"

"Oh, hoist your grandmother! Do ye not see that we're just fleein'?"

And, indeed, they were just fleeing. For the wind was from the east; and now that they were getting out from the bay, the gusts from over the cliffs struck frequent and hard, so that the *Osprey* went tearing along at an admirable pace, the foam churning at her bows. And Jess was merry; and the councillor was delighted; and Barbara could show off her ring, with its rosette of garnets; the schoolmaster alone seemed to have doubts about the wisdom, and the possible result, of this performance.

"I say, my friend," he observed to the steersman, "this is all very well, but how

are we going to get back? Don't you think we'd better keep up to windward—and try along the Sound, if you like——”

“Down the Sound of Kerrara—and a squally east wind blowing?” cried Peter, with explosive hilarity. “Na, na—not me! I wasna born yesterday! It's just the very mischief when the squalls come down on ye in the Sound; whereas here we're in the open; and if there's anything to make a bother, ye can see it before it strikes ye. Man, it's a fine thing to feel a boat just fleein' beneath ye! And an east wind's a land wind; where can the trouble be?—tell me that! Come, Miss Jessie, sing us a song, now! Ay, you can sing, for all that you're so blate about it, and it's so difficult to get ye to open your mouth. We're just fleein'. It's a fine boat, this. Give us a song, Miss Barbara—come, now! A fine boat—she answers to the helm just as if she was a living thing. I tell ye, it's a grand thing to be in a healthy climate like this—I could near sing a song myself——”

“We're all waiting for you, Mr. McFadyen!” said Jess.

“Ay, and do ye want me to make an ass of myself?” demanded Peter. “Well, I will.

I would rather make an ass of myself than not keep the thing going, when I'm out on a frolic of this kind. What is it to be? Dod, I'll make an ass of myself, if ye like——”

“Why every one knows you sing very well, Mr. McFayden,” said Jess, with not a thought of sarcasm in her mind.

“I'll tell ye a good one now,” said Mr. McFadyen—and his small, roguish eyes were twinkling mirthfully, “a real good one. There was a chap I knew and he was boasting of his fine teeth, and says he ‘I never once beheld the face of a dentist—I mean in anger.’ ‘In anger,’ says he. ‘Never beheld the face of a dentist—in anger’——” And here Peter burst into such a guffaw of laughter, and paid such small attention to the swaying tiller that only the merciful little cherub that sits up aloft could have said how a most ruthless gybe was avoided.

“But the song, Mr. McFadyen?” said Jess.

For a second Peter grew grave; he was considering. Then arose an unearthly howl—

‘Cam’ ye by Athol, lad wi’ the philabeg,
Down by the Tummel, or banks o’ the Garry?
Saw ye the lads wi’ their bonnets and white cockades,
Leaving their mountains to follow Prince Charlie?’

Follow thee, follow thee, wha wadna follow thee—
Lang hast thou loved and trusted us fairly!
Charlie, Charlie, wha wadna follow thee—
King o' the Highland hearts, Bonnie Prince Charlie!

The high-pitched 'wha' was almost beyond him; but Mr. McFadyen was not the man to give in; he attacked it gallantly; and the result was a screech that must have startled the distant jackdaws far up among the ivied ruins of Duntroone Castle.

"It's a little thing high for me," he remarked, with an air of apology; and he did not venture on a second verse; he was again observing the movements of the lad Malcolm—who had come aft to haul in the main-sheet, now that they were taking a more southerly course, with the wind on their beam.

"Well, Barbara," said the schoolmaster, "do you see the Lady Rock over yonder?"

The girl looked up in quick alarm.

"We're not going near there!" she exclaimed.

"No, no," said the councillor, gaily. "We'll just hold right on, and give ye a look at the Mull coast. It's a desolate place: a passing glimpse is all ye'll want."

However, as it turned out, they were to

have more than a passing glimpse. For as time went on, those squalls from the east became more and more violent and vicious, and with each successive gust the too heavily canvassed boat would go heeling over, with a prodigious rattle of the loose spars on deck. The schoolmaster did not at all like the aspect of affairs; but he was loth to call in question the councillor's seamanship, lest he should frighten the young women; while the lad Malcolm had ceased to make any further suggestions—he watched those tearing and howling blasts, and then glanced uneasily towards the steersman to see what he would do. Mr. McFadyen of course was not to be daunted by any buffeting of wind and waves; outwardly at least he maintained a perfectly careless demeanour; he was even facetious at times; but it was too evident that his jocundity was forced. And meanwhile Barbara was beginning to show signs of abject terror.

“I say, McFadyen, this'll never do,” Allan interposed at last. “We should have taken down a couple of reefs before coming out in this squally weather. Or couldn't you lower the peak, to take the strain off her? Anyhow we must try to work our way back.”

“Ay, just that,” responded the councillor, with assumed equanimity. “Oh, yes, I suppose we may as well go back now. We’ve had a fine spin—and now we’ll go back.”

Which was all very well; but to run before a series of squalls is one thing, and to fight back against them is another. And now these gusts continued to increase in fury, insomuch that the councillor, hardly concealing his dismay, would seek a precarious safety in jamming the boat’s head into the wind, where she would stagger for a second or so with the sails cracking and flapping. Then just as often as not she would fill on the other side—with her weather sheets home; and here again would be further commotion—the clinging folk in the cockpit being flung about like peas in a bladder. And all this time the cutter was steadily drifting—drifting on to a lee shore; and that lee shore the east coast of Mull.

“Here, you,” called out McFadyen, in his anger and desperation, “what’s the price of this boat?”

The lad Malcolm did not answer: he seemed bewildered.

“I’ve a great mind,” Peter called out

again, savagely, "to run her over to Mull there, and bang her up on the beach!"

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Barbara, piteously; "anywhere that we can get ashore!"

"Would I not be doing right?—would I not be doing right?" he said, eagerly appealing to her for confirmation. "What do I care for the cost of a boat? Human lives are of more value. I am responsible for your safety; what do I care for this rotten old beast of a boat, that cannot sail any more than a cow? You lad, there, get out an oar, and put her head away from the wind: I'm going to run her up on the nearest shore, that's what I'm going to do, and ye may get the splinters back to Duntroone as best ye can."

Almost immediately thereafter there seemed to fall around them an amazing calm and quiet; the tumult appeared to cease; they were gliding smoothly along with the hurrying waves, the main-sheet slacked out, the jib drawing steadily. Nor had Allan the heart to protest against this ignominious surrender, when he saw the agony of fright that Barbara was in; her sole prayer was to get to land; she did not care where or how. And the councillor, smarting under

the humiliating consciousness of defeat, was as good as his word ; his teeth were set hard, his looks sullen ; he steered neither to the right nor to the left, for the navigation of Loch Speliv and that of Loch Don were equally unknown to him ; he was resolved upon running this unmanageable boat right up on the nearest shore—and he did it.

Not that it was accomplished without a good deal of confusion. As they neared the beach there was a thunder of breaking waves all around ; then of a sudden the bow of the cutter seemed to rise in the air ; she swung over to starboard, the boom splashing into the water ; spray began to break over the stern ; and the wrecked company proceeded to get forward and clamber down by the bowsprit shrouds and the bobstay. Of course they got pretty well wet in the tumbling surf ; but at least they had now gained solid land—in a strange twilight, under the shadows of the hills. And the boat ?

“ Let the boat go to the devil ! ” said Peter, furiously, as he knocked the water out of his nether garments. “ Let her go to the bottom ! She’s not fit for anything else. A boat that cannot sail is better at the bottom of the sea than anywhere else.”

“Well,” said Allan, with a more philosophic air, “I suppose we’ll have to search for some farmhouse or some cottar’s hut, where Jessie and Barbara can be sheltered for the night; and I will make my way to Craigenure or some such place, and try to get a telegram sent to Mrs. Maclean.”

“But the lad—what about the young lad?” asked the ever considerate Jess.

The lad Malcolm, who had not made any remark during all this transaction, was now engaged in getting down the mainsail; and as the bow of the boat was firmly imbedded in seaweed and shingle—and as the jib remained sheeted home—it appeared quite possible that she would not swing broadside on to the beach. They called to him to come ashore; but he answered something about a kedge. At all events he was in no danger—when he chose he could clamber down from the bowsprit with no greater damage than wet knees.

But this was the most uncanny region in which they now found themselves: a solitary and voiceless region—no sign of any human habitation—no sign of any road—nothing but undulations of rocky moorland and heather leading up to precipitous and sterile crags.

And no less remarkable was it when they turned from this clear, intense twilight to regard the glowing and warm-coloured world they had left behind; for the storm seemed already to have abated considerably, and away over by Cruachan and Cruach Lerags and Loch Feochan the skies were quite serene.

“Barbara,” said the schoolmaster, timidly—not wishing to provoke her to any petulance, “don’t you think you would make another trial? We may be wandering about this coast all through the night before coming to a house—and Mrs. Maclean will be very anxious. The wind seems to be slackening down——”

“Will you keep away from the Lady Rock?” she said, with terrified eyes.

“Yes, yes,” he answered her. “I quite understand why you should be nervous—I quite understand that; but we can keep well away from the Lady Rock; we will be making across for Kerrara and the entrance to the bay. If the lad has put out a kedge, we might get the boat floated off, for the tide is on the flood; and anything would be better than wandering about the shore of Mull all night.”

And eventually he did persuade her to go down to the beach again, though she still looked on the disabled *Osprey* with evident apprehension. There could be no doubt that meanwhile the squalls had moderated in vehemence.

“Allan,” said Jess, demurely, “do you not think that Mr. McFadyen has had enough of the hard work? Why should you not sail the boat back?”

He looked at her; and whenever the eyes of those two met there was an instant intelligence between them.

“Oh, I’ll take my turn,” said he. “Yes, I’ll take my turn. And we’ll try her with a little less canvas on her.”

It was a tedious and difficult business getting the boat floated off again; but at last they had her under way, with her mainsail double-reefed; and as Allan was now in charge of the tiller, it fell to the gay McFadyen to beguile the time and cheer his companions with song. He sang of ‘Craigie Burn Wood;’ he sang ‘My Nannie’s awa’;’ he sang ‘There grows a bonnie brier-bush,’ and ‘Flow gently, sweet Afton,’ and ‘Logie o’ Buchan, O Logie the laird,’ and many another well-established favourite. And all the while they were

sailing through an enchanted world of fire and splendour; and when, after the long beat to windward, they entered Duntroone Bay, there was a golden moon in the south, and the lapping waters glanced and shivered in this new radiance.

“All’s well that ends well,” said Peter, as he courageously stepped ashore. “We’ve had a splendid sail, and a fine adventure. And after all, maybe it’s better for us to be back on the mainland rather than passing the night in some lonely wee public-house in the east of Mull.”

CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD A STEAMER.

THESE ought to have been halcyon days for the schoolmaster: vacation time—a newly-won and beautiful sweetheart — and the winding shores, the solitary bays, and the wild hills of the West Highlands for their long summer rambles. Then he had found an easy way of propitiating her to kindness and even to gratitude: when he brought her some little bit of millinery ornament she was as pleased as an infant with a new toy. Nor did he greatly deprecate the love of finery, and the love of display, that appeared to have gradually taken possession of her since she came to live in Duntroone. In many respects she was but a child; and in her very childishness and ignorance there was for him a mysterious charm. Philosophy

—poetry—history: these were all written about human life; but here was that strangest of all strange things, a human life itself—wonderful, incomprehensible, and yet dowered with an increasing and enthralling fascination. Halcyon days indeed—‘the golden age—the golden age come back.’

No, he did not grudge her these pretty trifles—though he would rather have been saving up the cost of them for more important ends; and he was glad to see her wearing them; and proud of her appearance at all times. But now a much more serious matter intervened. When they came to discuss the question of choosing a house, he found that Barbara’s ideas and claims were of a kind to take his breath away.

“You will be giving up your lodgings,” said she, boldly, “and why should you not give up the rooms for your classes as well, and put everything in one, so that you could have a good house like Rose Bank?”

“Rose Bank?” said he, in astonishment. “Do you know what the rent of Rose Bank is likely to be, Barbara?”

“They are telling me,” she responded, without flinching, “that your classes are sure to be getting bigger and bigger.”

"I wonder," said he, good-naturedly, "who ever heard of a poor schoolmaster being able to pay for a view!"

"Yes, it is a very fine view," said Barbara. "And I would like to see the steamers coming into the bay and going out; and every one coming in and going out would see the house."

"And what would they think? They would think I had married a fortune!"

"And why not then?" she retorted audaciously. "Let them think that, if they like! They are welcome to think that, if they like!"

He did not pursue the argument further, for she was apt to grow petulant when opposed; but on the earliest possible opportunity he went along to call on Mr. McFadyen, who he imagined would be sure to know all about rents, and rates and taxes, and the cost of furniture. Mr. McFadyen was in his office; and when he was told of Barbara's ambitious project, he openly laughed.

"Rose Bank?" said the merry councillor. "I'm thinking, Allan, lad, ye'd soon be Rose Bankrupt! What would be the use of that big garden to you? See, now, I'll just take down my hat, and we'll go out for a half-hour's stroll here and there, and have a look

round: maybe we may light on something a little more practicable than Rose Bank."

So the two left the office together, and set out on their house-hunting expedition; though it soon began to look as if this freak of generosity on the part of the councillor had not been wholly altruistic. He, also, seemed anxious to have advice and assurance.

"You're a clever fellow, Allan," he went on to say, "and learned and deep in metaphysics and the like o' that; and I've been wanting to put a question to you. I've been wanting to ask you whether it is his real self that a man reveals to himself in his dreams. Ye see, it's this way. I don't boast that I have more courage than other folk; I wouldna do that; but I hope I have my share—it's reasonable to hope I have my share. Well, then, if in a dream ye feel yourself a terrible, terrible coward, and if ye act as a coward, is that your real self—is that how ye would act if the circumstances were to happen to ye in real life? Ye see, it's this way. The night before last I had a long and harassing dream; I thought I was a soldier—and there was going to be a battle—and we were all drawn up in ranks—in a half kind of darkness, for the daylight

was not yet declared. The enemy—savages—was coming near; every moment we expected to hear the firing begin. I tell ye, the mortal fear that I was in I cannot describe to ye. There was a great big man in front of me, and I kept behind him as well as I could, and thought he might shelter me from the bullets. And then there was a corporal, or a captain, or somebody like that standing behind us; and says I to him, in a clever, offhand sort of way ‘Ye need not think I’m frightened; I’m just going along to sharpen my sword on the doorstep—it’s a wee thing blunt.’ And then I moved off to an empty house that was hard by; and I passed in, and went away up to an attic; and thinks I to myself ‘Now I’ll crouch down here in the dark; and when it’s all over, I’ll go out again, and flourish my sword, and they’ll think I was through everything.’ And then thinks I ‘But if the savages drive back our men, will the black devils come up the stair, and find me, and drag me out?’ Dod, I was in a terrible way; but I hid close all the same; and the firing began—crack! crack!—until I couldna help creeping up and looking out of the window; and as sure as death, along with

our men, facing the savages, there was a woman. And says I to myself ‘Have ye not as much courage as that woman?’—and even then I would have gone down the stair, and gone out, but I declare to ye my knees were shaking so that I could not cross the floor. What happened after that I’m no sure; but I ask ye—Was that me? Was that my real self? Is that what I would have felt, what I would have done, in a real battle? It’s been distressing me, man, beyond measure! Was that my real self?”

“Oh, no, not necessarily!” Allan replied, and the councillor seemed instantly to experience considerable relief. “Just as often as not a man does things in dreams that he would never think of in real life—is a perfectly different person, in short. The chances are you are dreaming when your vitality is at its lowest point—the bravest man may imagine himself as timorous as a mouse—the wandering brain may suggest all kinds of horrors——”

“Because,” said Mr. McFadyen, thoughtfully, “I would not like to think myself just such a coward as all that comes to. And yet—well, I have been trying to screw up my courage—and—and slackening away

again. And I have been wondering—yes, I will confess this to you—I have been wondering what was the best way to ask a young woman if she will marry you?”

“I suppose every man has to find that out for himself,” Allan answered.

“Ay, do ye say that?” the councillor rejoined, with a meditative air. “Do ye say that? Every man to find out for himself.” And then he heaved a pensive sigh. “I’m thinking it’s a terrible business,” said he, absently.

On the first expedition they were unsuccessful—it was not a good time of year for house-hunting, when nearly every place, big or little, was let; but within the next day or two Allan heard of a small villa up in Battery Terrace that would become vacant in about a month’s time, and he persuaded Barbara to go with him to look at it. Barbara was at first clearly disappointed by the size of this two-storeyed tenement; but its position—the position of the whole of the Terrace, indeed—was certainly conspicuous enough; it commanded a view over the whole of the bay. The lady in occupation—who was merely a summer tenant—appeared to recognise the situation of affairs; she displayed quite a

friendly interest in this shy and beautiful-eyed young creature; and was most amiable in showing her the not over numerous apartments. The strange thing was that when they came out again, Barbara's first remark had no reference to this house they had been examining.

"When will you be taking Jessie and me to Tobermory?" she asked.

"Tobermory will not run away," he said, trying to get out of it in this fashion. "It will wait for us. There's no hurry."

"You said you would take us," she persisted.

"But if you wish for a sail, why not take the *Grenadier*, and let us go all the way round, and have a look at Staffa, and Iona, and the islands?"

"I do not wish to see islands," she said, almost sullenly; "I have had enough of islands. I wish to see the people in Tobermory who are Mrs. Maclean's relatives, for they are my relatives too."

Well, he was most reluctant—though he could hardly have explained why—to go anywhere in the *Aros Castle*; yet after all this was but a trifling favour; whereas she had granted to him the greatest he could

have demanded of her. Had she not acceded to his prayer that the wedding should take place in these present summer holidays—though many a girl would have insisted on a longer engagement?

“Very well, then,” he said, “as soon as you like”—and without more ado she would have him at once go down with her to see Jess, and make plans for the trip.

And thus it was that on one of these mornings the schoolmaster called for the two girls, and together they set forth, leaving the precincts of the town, and making for the South Pier, where the *Aros Castle* was lying. For this excursion Barbara had certainly decked herself out in her best and bravest; and again she had compelled him to wear a flower in the lapel of his light grey coat; indeed he and she might well be taken for bride and bridegroom away on their honeymoon tour, had it not been for the presence of Jess, whose costume, neat and trim as always, was nevertheless not of a showy kind. And yet, in spite of the general holiday appearance of this little party, Allan Henderson’s face was grave. He could not but remember what had happened on a recent occasion.

“Barbara,” said he, in something of an undertone, when they were approaching the steamer, “I do not know what quarrel you have with Ogilvie; but I hope at least you will not make any public display of it.”

“I am not wishing to have anything whatever to do with Ogilvie,” she said, with her head erect.

And here, sure enough, was the Purser, who regarded them with not a little surprise, especially when he saw that they were actually coming on board. All the same he advanced to meet them—with a kind of doubtful look on his face. It was Barbara who went first along the gangway. He raised his cap—waiting for her to decide whether there was to be any further greeting: in response to his salutation she accorded him the briefest and frigidest of little bows, then she turned haughtily away, without a word. Jess came next; but with the ever-friendly Jess there was no trouble; he shook hands with her; and said “I hope you are very well, Miss Jessie”; and she passed blithely and smilingly on. As between the two men there was but the common and familiar nod, which meant nothing: it bespoke neither friendship nor enmity. Altogether,

whatever embarrassment may have been felt, none was allowed to become manifest ; besides, the Purser had his multifarious duties to attend to ; there was every excuse for his not coming and paying further attention to these acquaintances of his.

Barbara would remain on this upper deck, so Allan went and fetched three camp-stools. She was quite gay and talkative ; she was in holiday mood as well as in holiday attire ; indeed, Jess had an uneasy feeling that she was making a parade of her high spirits and general satisfaction. However, there was a good deal of bustle going on around ; for now the passengers had arrived from the train ; the cables were being thrown off ; and presently the *Aros Castle* was steaming across to the North Pier. Then, after a brief delay, the voyage was resumed ; slowly, but with increasing speed, they crept away from the houses ; they passed the lofty rock with its time-worn ruins ; they stood away out into the swift-glancing blue waters of the Frith of Lorn. It was a perfect day ; the colours on the hills were of a velvet softness, with here and there a stain of ethereal purple from some high and almost motionless cloud. The air was sweet and

fresh, with a sharp and keen sea-flavour in it.

But as they drew towards Mull, Barbara's ostentatious enjoyment became moderated somewhat; and once or twice she looked apprehensively forward.

"Don't you be afraid, Barbara," the school-master said to her, reassuringly; "we are not going anywhere near the Lady Rock. Of course I can well understand your being nervous: that must have been a bad hour or two you spent on the rocks there, in the darkness, though there was not so much cause for alarm, if you had only known. Now," he went on—talking for the sake of talk, to distract her attention from the solitary reef, round which the calm summer seas were now peacefully lapping—"there might have been something to terrify you on the night that Mr. McFadyen ran us ashore on the coast of Mull. Did you ever hear of Ewen of the little head?"

"No," said she, looking up.

"Well, that is the district he haunts—from Duart to Lochbuie," he proceeded, "and if we had had to wander about during the night, you might have seen the wild horseman, leaping over chasms, and spurring up

the sides of precipitous cliffs. That might indeed have terrified you——”

“But who was he?” she demanded: her eyes were beginning to ‘glower,’ as they always did when a phantom story was told her.

“Ewen of the little head?” he repeated. “Eobhann a’ chinn bhig—he was the eldest son of one of the Maclaines of Lochbuie; and as he was rebellious and turbulent, his father was forced to call in his kinsman, Maclean of Duart, to subdue him. Duart got together his men and marched down towards Lochbuie; and there was to be a great battle; and the night before the battle, Ewen of the little head went to a witch to ask her if he was to win on the morrow. But I should have told you that Ewen was married to a woman of great meanness and parsimony. Very well. When he had asked the witch she says to him ‘To-morrow morning, at breakfast, if your wife gives you butter without your asking for it, then you will win the battle.’ Next morning at breakfast Ewen waited and waited, and his wife offered him nothing. ‘Why are you drum-drumming with your feet on the ground?’ says she—for he was in a terrible

rage. 'It is better for a man to be slain,' says he, 'than live indoors with a bad wife.' And with that he rushed out, and called his followers to the battle; and almost at the very first onset, he had his head slashed from his shoulders with one stroke of a broadsword. And then it was that his horse tore away, and galloped and galloped through the glens and over the hills—for days and days he was seen—the headless horseman in full armour, galloping across impossible places, at a fearful speed. Ay, and he is seen now. He is seen whenever any harm is going to happen to one of the Maclaines of Lochbuie. And that would indeed have been something to terrify you, if you had encountered Eobhann a' chinn bhig, the night we were ashore on Mull."

"It is to frighten children that they are telling such stories," she said—though she herself seemed considerably impressed.

"No, no, Barbara," Jess said, with the shrewd and pleasant grey eyes smiling. "That is not why the story is told. The story is told by husbands to warn their wives not to be too miserly with them."

And with this desultory talk, varied by an occasional glance at their fellow-passengers,

they called in at Craigenure, and left again and went onwards and across to Loch Aline—*Loch Aluinn*, the beautiful loch—and resumed their course up the Sound of Mull, the day all radiant around them. At the same time Jess could not but be conscious that she was the third person here. These two must of necessity have many things to speak of—their wedding—the house in Battery Terrace—their future plans—that they would prefer to talk over by themselves; and so she by-and-bye got up and began to stroll about a little, looking at this and that, until at length, in the course of her apparently aimless peregrinations, she went down the steps leading to the main-deck, and there she took her place on a seat by the gunwale, just aft of the companion descending to the saloon. Now they were free to talk as they chose; she could not see them, nor they her; probably by this time they had already forgotten her existence.

But there was some one else who had observed her retreat to this sheltered spot. In a little while the Purser came up to her.

“Miss Jessie,” said he, “I am very glad to have the chance of a word with you. I

think your cousin Barbara has got off her head."

"What do you mean, Mr. Ogilvie?" said Jess, rather bridling up.

"Well, she came down to the quay the other day," he went on bluntly enough, "and she was as insulting as she could be—aloud—so that there was no mistake but that I should hear. And what I say is, she'd better keep a quiet tongue. I do not want to make mischief; but I will not suffer that kind of thing from any young madam, I do not care who she is. And that is what I say: your cousin had better keep a quiet tongue. I have a piece of paper in my pocket at this moment; it was lucky I did not tear it up and throw it away. But there was a bit of a tussle between Henderson and me; and I did not know what might come of it; and I thought I might as well keep this scrap of writing." He brought out a leather pocket-book. "I am not vindictive," he proceeded; "but I will not have insolence from anybody. And I wonder what Henderson would say if he saw this?"

He extracted from the pocket-book a folded piece of paper, and opened it, and handed it to her. She recognised Barbara's handwriting

readily enough—‘*Will you meet me to-night at nine o’clock, at the small gate under the Castle Hill? I have something of importance to say to you.—Barbara.*’

“Do you see what that means?” he said. “I can hear her talking and boasting about a house in Battery Terrace, whenever I chance to pass by; but she does not know that I have that little message in my pocket. And of course I did not go; I did not even answer her; I’m for a quiet life; I refuse to be dragged into trouble to please her or anybody else.”

For a moment or two Jess was silent, as she stared blankly at the words before her, and her fingers were slightly trembling; she began to understand certain matters that had of late been strange to her.

“But you told me—you did not wish to make mischief?” she said, slowly.

“No,” he replied, with a certain hesitation. “I do not particularly want to make mischief. At the same time——”

Quick as thought she tore the paper twice across and pitched the fragments over the side: they floated away on the seething foam in the wake of the vessel. And almost as white as that foam were her firm-set lips.

· He looked mortified only for a second.

“I suppose you think you’ve done your cousin a very good turn?” he said, with an appearance of equanimity. “Perhaps so. But if the writing has been destroyed, the facts remain. And I tell you the young madam had better take care.”

CHAPTER III.

A PUBLIC SACRIFICE.

IT was on one of these afternoons, as Allan Henderson and Barbara were returning homewards by the shores of the solitary and beautiful Loch Sleochan, that they beheld a marvellous apparition steal slowly into the still landscape. Far away, beyond the glassy waters of the lake, far away beyond the swampy morass where the curlews were calling, down the lonely moorland road came a long, undulatory, straggling assemblage, dark in hue as contrasted with the surrounding country, yet showing tags and dots of colour here and there.

“What is that?” asked Barbara, with her eyes staring.

“Terrible as an army with banners,” said the schoolmaster. “It is a revolution, Barbara. No, it is a resurrection—of all

the hosts slain in the time of Eobhan a' chinn bhig——”

He paused. Surely there was some faint and measured throb borne to them on the listening air?—and was there not a glint of sunlit brass at the head of the long and serpentine procession? The martial music became more audible.

“Whoever they are, friends or foes, we must meet them, Barbara,” said the school-master.

But that was precisely what did not happen. For at this point the road wound round one or two promontories jutting out into the mirror-like lake, so that they lost sight of that distant concourse of folk; and when in process of time they again came in view of the head of the loch, there was not a human being anywhere visible. It looked as if the earth had suddenly opened and swallowed them up.

“Did I not tell you they were ghosts?” said Allan.

“They have gone into the grounds of Inveruran House,” retorted Barbara. “I can hear the band still playing.”

Well, when these two arrived at the lodge-gate, Allan made bold to ask the woman in

charge what was meant by this portentous invasion of so secluded a neighbourhood; and she answered him that the young laird had invited the temperance societies of Duntroone to come out and listen to an address and witness a ceremony; and that a number of the townspeople had accompanied them. From the way she hung back she evidently expected that Allan and his companion would also pass in; and Barbara was curious; spectacular displays of any kind are rare in that country-side; so the two new-comers accepted the mute invitation, and entered. As it chanced, they were well repaid.

For when they had reached the end of the winding avenue, and emerged into the open, a remarkable scene presented itself. On the steps in front of the open hall door stood four persons: a tall, elderly lady dressed in deep mourning, two younger ladies in more cheerful attire, and an oldish-looking young man of about eight-and-twenty, with clean-shaven face and rather tired eyes. At the foot of the wide steps, on the carriage drive, were ranged rows of large vats and barrels. Then all around stood the crowd, in a sort of loose semi-circle, most of the men wearing badges and insignia, conspicuous amongst which

were the red and white and blue and white sashes of the Rechabites. When the school-master and Barbara drew near the motley gathering, about the first person they recognised was Long Lauchie, the shoemaker; and by him they remained; doubtless he could tell them as well as anyone what was going forward.

At first, indeed, there was nothing but an ordinary temperance lecture, which the young man with the grey, worn face was delivering, if not with eloquence, at least with a convincing simplicity and earnestness. But if these statements he was making were familiar, they were none the less welcomed by his audience with an extraordinary enthusiasm; cheer after cheer arose at the end of each telling sentence; and even the lads and boys who formed the fringe of the throng contributed their reckless hurrahs. All save Long Lauchie seemed to share in the general excitement. The unhappy Lauchlan was silent and depressed; his eyes were lustreless; a melancholy 'of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,' appeared to have possession of his soul. His gay sash was hardly in keeping with this air of profound despondency.

But it was now that young Murray of Inveruran proceeded to explain the chief reason why he had asked these good folk to assemble. He would not, he said, utter a single word against those who had gone before him ; other times had other manners ; and there was no doubt that our forefathers had been in the habit of drinking more than was good for them. In these present days the national conscience had become awakened ; serious attention had been called to the widespread misery and ruin resulting from the use of alcohol ; and man's duty to his fellow man had become part of the accepted moral law. Long ago, he went on, he had resolved that when in the course of nature he came to succeed to the Inveruran estate, one of his first acts would be to see that every butt and bin of wine, every cask of ale and spirits, found in the cellar should be destroyed ; and if circumstances had detained him in foreign parts during the last few years, and delayed the execution of this project, the time had at length arrived. It was not, he said, a trifling sacrifice. Large sums could have been obtained for the various wines that, for convenience sake, had now been decanted

and emptied into the vats before them. There were ports, sherries, madeiras of almost incredible age ; there were Burgundies, clarets, Rhine wines of inestimable quality ; there were brandies and whiskies that had been handed down from generation to generation, and carefully tended and replenished. But no pecuniary inducement could tempt him to the dissemination of poison. It must be destroyed !

[Here there was an indescribable commotion throughout the crowd ; the yelling and cheering became tumultuous ; the small boys threw their caps in the air, with more wild hurrahs. Long Lauchie sighed heavily.]

It had been suggested to him, the young laird proceeded, that he might have sent these wines and spirits to the great hospitals in the south. But medical men did not seem to agree as to the efficacy of alcohol in cases of illness ; and even if it could be proved that here and there some slight advantage might accrue, the counterbalancing risk of sowing the seeds of fatal habits was of far greater import. No ; he would have no half-measures ; he would carry his principles into practice ; there was nothing for it but the utter extermination, so far as lay in one's

power, of those pernicious fluids that were wrecking the body and soul of our fellow-creatures.

“John!”

There was a little old man standing by, a little old man with short side-whiskers, who held a hammer in his hand.

“Perhaps,” said the young laird, with a dry smile coming over his prematurely dessicated face, “perhaps it may interest you, gentlemen, to know that the first cask to be opened contains between twenty and thirty dozen of Madeira, that made several long voyages in my great-grandfather’s time. It has come to the end of its travels at last.”

He signed with his finger to the little old man, who in a nervous and tremulous fashion went along to the furthest vat. There, after some tugging and hammering, the bung was extracted, and at once there gushed forth a stream of clear amber fluid. A hoarse roar of rejoicing arose from the crowd. “Hurrah!—hurrah!” shouted the small boys. And Lauchlan MacIntyre, when he observed the turbid rivulet come along the channel for draining the carriage drive—so close under their feet that Barbara had to step on to the lawn to save her skirts—Lauchlan regarded

it with an air of still deeper dejection, and sighed more heavily than before.

"I admire that young man," said the schoolmaster. "It may be idiotcy—but there's earnestness at the back of it. And he's a weakly-looking creature, too."

Barrel after barrel followed—red streams, golden streams, white streams, commingling and rushing away down the sloping drive; while the din and clamour of the exultant Rechabites filled the quiet evening air.

"Poor old Sandy Livingstone!" said the schoolmaster, absently. "There's now one water the less for him to poach. This stuff will have killed every sea-trout in the Uran burn."

"It is a sin and a shame!" said Barbara, in sharper tones. "There are many poor people who might have had the benefit, in the cold of the winter."

"What, what?—you must not talk like that, Barbara!" her companion remonstrated. "You have been greatly privileged. You have witnessed a sacred rite. You have beheld a libation poured out in honour of one of the new gods; and who knows but that the new god may be well worthy of worship? Anyhow, the worship itself is the valuable

thing: think with what a serene conscience that young man will fall asleep to-night."

"Ay, the conscience," murmured Lauchlan, from the depths of his woe. "You may well say that—you may well say that. It's the conscience that has to be obeyed—though the flesh cries out in its wakeness."

And at length the work of destruction was complete; there remained nothing but the empty tuns and the purple and brown stains on the gravel. Then the hero of the hour thanked the assemblage for having responded to his invitation; they gave him three cheers, and one cheer more; the band took up position; the ranks were re-formed; and to the stirring strains of 'Neil Gow's Farewell to Whisky' the whole concourse, small boys and all, set out again for Duntroone. There was no very strict order kept on this line of march; stragglers from the crowd joined in the procession so as to chat with their friends; and thus it was that Lauchie MacIntyre could still have with him the two young people whose society, in his present dolorous state, had proved something of a solace to him.

"I'm afraid," said Allan—in an interval of peace allowed them by the band—

"I'm afraid you're not looking so well, Lauchlan."

"No, I am not well at ahl," replied Lauchlan, with another heavy sigh. "I have been eating nothing, or next to nothing, for some time back. I'm not fit to be here the day—but it was a great occasion—for giving testimony——"

The band broke in upon them with 'Johnny Cope'—a fine marching tune. When quiet had been restored Lauchlan turned to the other and younger of his companions.

"I was hearing of the wedding, Miss Barbara," he said. "And there's a little present I have waiting for you—will you come into the house, and take it home with you?"

"Indeed I am obliged to you, Mr. MacIntyre," responded Barbara, with glad assent. Allan looked a little disconcerted: it was scarcely for one in Long Lauchie's circumstances to be buying wedding-presents. But the schoolmaster did not at the moment put in an objection; he was unwilling to rob Barbara of any little pleasure; and perhaps after all the gift might not be of much value.

So when they had got back to Duntroone, the three of them made for the shoemaker's humble dwelling, and ascended to the room on the first floor. It was a cheerless-looking place; and perhaps it was the doleful aspect of it, or perhaps it was the fatigue of the march, that seemed to overcome Lauchlan; with a hopeless groan he sank down upon a wooden chair. And then again he raised his head, and began to look round the apartment, warily and fearfully.

"Sometimes," he said, in a sombre fashion, "sometimes I am seeing things that are not there."

Then he appeared to remember why he had invited these guests to come indoors; he got up from the chair, and went away, slowly and dejectedly, to a cupboard in the passage.

"Barbara," said the schoolmaster, in a quick undertone, "Lauchlan MacIntyre is far from well. Could you not offer to make him some tea?"

"I could not offer to make tea in another person's house," she replied, not too civilly.

Almost at the same moment Lauchlan returned, holding in both hands (for they were shaking a little) his wedding-gift. It was an old-fashioned four-tubed Scandinavian

liqueur-bottle, that originally had been something rather fine; but it had been debased by the addition of a flaunting electro-plated handle and stopper; and was now apparently serving as a whisky-decanter.

"It belonged to my wife," said he, "and she might come back to tek it aweh."

"Oh, thank you indeed!" said Barbara, receiving the gift with manifest gratification.

"Barbara—you cannot!" interposed the schoolmaster, with an angry and impatient frown. "It is Mrs. MacIntyre's!"

"Ay, that is the reason—that is just the reason," said Lauchlan, as he sank into the chair again. "She might come back. I am not wishing for it to be here. And it is of no use to me now," he went on mournfully. "It is of no use any more—never any more. It is a sign of evil things that have been thrown aside; I am not wishing to see it again."

"Barbara," the schoolmaster once more protested, "put that decanter back in the cupboard. It belongs to Mrs. MacIntyre."

"But if Mr. MacIntyre is wishing it out of the house," Barbara rejoined—and she showed no disposition to part with her present—"it is for him to decide."

"Ay, ay, tek it aweh," said or moaned the

shoemaker, and he disconsolately shook his head. "There will be no bottles of any kind in this house, not any more—never any more."

Well, the schoolmaster would not interfere further; but as he and Barbara walked away home to Campbell Street, there were black looks on his face; and barely a word was spoken between them. Barbara did not seem to be much concerned; she carried the electro-plated decanter wrapped up in a half-sheet of the *Duntroone Times*; she was doubtless looking forward to a further contemplation of her treasure. And indeed Allan, still in one of his dark moods, was disposed to leave her to her own devices; when they reached the house, he bade her good-bye curtly, without offering to accompany her upstairs; and when she had gone, he forthwith betook himself to the shop over the way, where he found Jess behind the counter.

At sight of Jess the 'dour' look on his face softened considerably; and it was in a kind of appealing fashion that he told her all about the shoemaker and his disastrous plight.

"O the poor man!" she exclaimed. "If he is as ill as that, and not having anything to eat, he will get worse and worse. This is

what I will do now, Allan ; I will take along a few things, and see if he cannot be tempted—a Finnan-haddie and some strong tea would do him good, I am sure—and then he could go to his bed. And you must come with me, to compel him,” she added, laughing at him as usual. “It will be quite a relief to you to have someone to hector and overmaster ; it must be very dull for you in the holidays, when you have no one to browbeat and threaten.”

“Will you do that, Jessie ?” he said—not heeding her jibes.

Her answer was prompt and decisive. She went into the parlour to apprise her mother ; she whipped on a hat and jacket ; she got a basket and put a number of things into it ; and presently these two were on their way to the shoemaker’s, though Jess had to stop here and there to make a few purchases. Then, when they were in the house, she directed him to go into the room where the hapless Lauchie was still sitting, while she took possession of the kitchen. Lauchlan was not a cheerful companion ; and Allan, waiting there, could hear quite plainly what she was about : he could hear the sticks being put into the grate ; he could hear

them beginning to crackle in the flames; he could hear her getting forth plates and knives and forks from the cupboard. And not only that, but he could make out that Jess, as she went hither and thither, was contentedly and blithely singing to herself the song of the “Twa Bonnie Maidens”—

*‘ There are twa bonnie maidens, and three bonnie maidens,
Cam’ over the Minch and cam’ over the main;
Wi’ the wind for their way, and the corrie for their hame,
And they are dearly welcome to Skye again.’*

And well he knew the meaning of the enigmatic refrain—

*‘ Come along, come along, wi’ your boatie and your song,
My ain bonnie maidens, my twa bonnie maidens,
For the night it is dark, and the red-coat is gone,
And ye are dearly welcome to Skye again.’*

“She’s a good-hearted lass, that,” said Allan, almost to himself.

“Did ye speak?” asked Lauchlan—trying to rouse himself out of this stupor of abject misery.

“I say this,” continued the schoolmaster, “that Jessie Maclean has taken a great deal of trouble in bringing you these things; and you’re not going to offend her by refusing them.”

Refuse them? He could not!—they would

have awakened the pangs of hunger in the interior of a Caryatid. For here was Jess with a snow-white cloth for the small table ; and here were plates and knives and forks all bright and clean ; and here was a golden-shining Finnan haddock, smoking hot and well peppered ; and here was crisp brown toast, with pats of fresh butter ; and here were young lettuces plentifully besprinkled with vinegar. Then the tea, not over-sweetened, was strong enough to have galvanised a mummy ; so that gradually, when Lauchlan had eaten and drank a little, the apprehensions of imminent death—alternating perhaps with some vague longing for the same—appeared to fade away somewhat from his features.

“It is a kind woman you are,” he said to her, in Gaelic, “and it is I that am thankful to you for coming here this evening.”

“Then you must go to bed soon, and have a sound night’s rest,” Jessie answered him.

“Ay, ay, just that,” he said, reverting to English—“and maybe—maybe I’ll not be seeing them things that are not there.”

They left him much comforted in body and mind ; and as Allan accompanied Jess back to the shop, he was endeavouring to

express his gratitude to her for her charity towards the unhappy shoemaker. But Jess did not seem to think much of what she had done; when she bade him good-bye, she returned to the little parlour and to her placid knitting; and as the ‘Twa Bonnie Maidens’ had got into her head, she occasionally beguiled herself with a phrase or a stanza.

*‘There’s a wind on the tree, and a ship on the sea,
My ain bonnie maidens, my twa bonnie maidens;
Your cradle I’ll rock on the lea of the rock,
And ye’ll aye be welcome to Skye again.’*

“You’re crooning there like a cushie doo,” said her mother, looking up from her newspaper. “Has any one asked ye to marry him?”

“They’re not likely to do that, mother,” she answered, with great contentment. “And I’m well enough without.”

CHAPTER IV.

BEST MAN AND BRIDEGROOM.

BUT Jess was mistaken. There was at least one person whose sole and consuming anxiety at this moment was to ask her to become his wife, if only he could summon up his courage and also find an opportune occasion. The latter point was the councillor's chief difficulty. As for courage, he had resolved to discard the shadowy evidence of dreams ; if at times he had found his physical nerve not quite what it might be, he had on the other hand a sufficiency of moral will ; he made no doubt that when the great crisis came he would be able to acquit himself. But how was he to have private speech with Jess when she was either sitting in the parlour with her mother, or walking out with Barbara, or consulting with Allan about the window-hangings of

his new house? And then every day the schoolmaster's wedding was drawing nearer; and he, Peter, was to be best man—with this supreme problem of his life left unsolved. The councillor grew desperate. He determined that he would take the very first chance that presented itself, no matter how, when, or where, to free himself from this terrible perplexity.

And yet it was not an auspicious chance, as it turned out. One morning he was walking along Campbell Street, and in passing the tobacconist's shop he glanced in and noticed that Jessie was behind the counter, and that she was standing there alone. A sort of vertigo of bravery rushed to McFadyen's head: he would dare his fate then and there. He stood stock-still for only a second; perhaps it was to collect himself for the plunge; then he entered the shop. Jess received him with the kindest greeting.

"Have you heard," he said, after a brief bewildered pause, "that I am to be Allan's best man?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, "Barbara was telling me that."

"Ay——" And here there was another pause. He seemed trying to utter something.

“Ay,” he managed to say at length, “but I would rather be going to the wedding in another capacity.”

“Well, well,” said Jess, with a touch of wonder in her benignant grey eyes, “would you like to be the bridegroom yourself? But I am not astonished; all the young men are daft about Barbara—every one of them; they cannot keep their eyes off her when she is in church——”

“No, no, I did not mean that at all,” the councillor broke in, hurriedly. “Do ye not understand, Miss Jessie—it is not as anybody’s best man I would like to go to the wedding — there’s something else possible——”

“I want two ounces of cut cavendish and a clay pipe,” said a thin small voice, and a little red-headed lassie came timidly forward and put a silver coin on the counter.

Mr. McFadyen glared at this youthful emissary as though he could have strangled her; but there was nothing for it but the smothering of his wrath; he had perforce to wait in silence until she was served and had gone away.

“Do ye not understand, Miss Jessie?” he resumed. “If there were two weddings on

the same day, would not that be better? I would rather go in the capacity of bridegroom than as best man—that's what I'm driving at. If Allan and me had our weddings on the same day, that would be something like. And how can you speak of Barbara? How can ye imagine I was ever thinking of Barbara? I'll not deny that she's an attractive kind of lass—ay, and well set up—the young Queen of Sheba I was calling her to Allan the other day—but, bless me, there's finer qualities than a slim waist and a silk gown——”

At this moment the door was darkened, and no less a person than the Provost—a big, burly man, with a frank, broad face and a loud, honest voice—looked in.

“Good morning, Miss Jessie!” said he.

“Good morning, Provost.”

“Ay, ye're there, friend McFadyen—I got a glimpse of you; and I was wanting to see you,” the Provost continued, briskly. “Have ye drawn out your notice about the North Pier?—I would like to have a look at it before ye submit it to the Council. But we're all with you; there'll be no opposition; we must just pay the £50 to the Board of Trade and get an examination; and I'll be

surprised if they find that the conditions of the grant of the foreshore have been complied with. Everyone admits that the state of the North Pier is a scandal and a disgrace to the town ; there'll be no opposition ; but I'd just like to have a look at the terms of the motion—if ye do not mind, that is—— ”

Mr. McFadyen was choking with rage and vexation ; but what could he do ? He could not throw the Provost into the street ; for the Provost was a man of large build. He could not bring his all-important conversation with Jess to its proper climax in presence of a stranger. And if he remained boxed-up in this corner, to be talked-to about the North Pier, his anger, that he with the greatest difficulty kept under control, would inevitably break forth and cause an amazing scene.

“ Come away, then—come away,” he said at last, with concealed ferocity. “ The paper is in my desk ; come along to the office, and I'll show it to ye there. Good-bye, Miss Jessie—I hope I will see you soon.” And therewith the luckless councillor departed—no doubt inwardly cursing the North Pier and the foreshore and everybody connected with both.

But fortune was more friendly towards him on the evening of this same day ; for as

he was passing along the front he perceived that the schoolmaster, Jess, and Barbara had all of them just got into a rowing-boat, bent on some excursion or another. He quickened his pace, got down upon the beach, and hailed them before they had gone any distance.

“Will ye ship another passenger?” he cried.

“If ye’ll take an oar,” Allan called in return—and he proceeded to back the stern in and on to the shingle.

“That will I!” said the councillor, blithely, and presently he had got into the boat and taken up his post at the bow. “I would not enter myself at a regatta,” he proceeded; “I’m not for showing off; but in an ordinary kind of way I can take an oar with anybody. Dod, some o’ the young fellows at the Gymnasium can do most astounding tricks!—but what’s the use o’ them? It’s steady work that pays in the end; and I could go on like this just the whole day. Did I tell ye they had made me treasurer? Ay, that’s my proud title: Treasurer of the Gymnastic Section of the Young Men’s Guild. It’s all very well for lads at their time of life to twirl themselves

round wooden bars ; but when it comes to accounts, they have to call in age and experience. A little longer stroke, Allan—slow and steady—that's it—that's it now—man, I could go on like this for four-and-twenty hours.”

Now oddly enough all of these remarks were addressed exclusively to the school-master. The moment of his entering the boat the quick eyes of the councillor had observed that Jess Maclean looked most unusually embarrassed. It could not be that he was unwelcome ? Or had she divined what he had been about to say to her when the burly Provost put in his unfortunate appearance ? The latter was the more probable ; and so much the better, Mr. McFadyen said to himself ; she must have had time to consider ; she would not be startled when next he had an opportunity of urging his suit.

But when and how was any such opportunity to be secured ? His companions seemed to have neither aim nor destination ; there was not even a hand-line in the boat ; they appeared to be quite content with sailing out into this world of strange and mystic splendour. And they had reason to be content. For if the sun had gone down

behind the deep rose-purple hills, there was still plenty of light and radiance; the after-glow was all around them; the bay and the outer seas as well formed but one vast lake of molten gold; while there was a warmth of hue along the hanging woods and the terraced gardens and houses they were leaving behind. Dark and clear were the lofty ruins of the Castle; dark and clear were the outjutting rocks in shadow; soft and clear was the twilight of the Maiden Island; but out in the open—far out on that golden lake—the one or two small boats that lay at the fishing banks were of the intensest black. These were magical evenings for lovers; no wonder the councillor longed to be of the company.

And after all Mr. McFadyen did find his chance; for when they had pulled away round by Camas Ban, Allan proposed that they should get ashore and go for a stroll along the level sands. Jess was the only one who hung back; she said she would rather remain in the boat; then they remonstrated; and finally, not to seem singular, she landed with them. And almost immediately the four became two and two; it could hardly be helped; in view of the imminent wedding, every one knew that

the schoolmaster and Barbara must have many things to talk over; and it was but common civility to leave them to themselves.

“Jessie,” said the councillor, when some little space intervened between the two couples, “did ye not understand what I was going to say to ye when the Provost came in this morning?”

“Maybe I guessed what it was—and maybe I was sorry to be guessing,” answered Jess, in a low voice.

“Ah, but you must not say that!” the councillor went on, anxiously and earnestly. “I’m not an ill-hearted man; and I’m not a spendthrift; ye would find a comfortable home; and I’ve waited a long time for ye, Jessie. I know there’s younger men than me; and it’s but natural ye should think of someone younger; but maybe they would not put such a value on you as I do. To me you’re just the one in ten thousand; the best I ever knew, and the best-dispositioned; when you try to say a spiteful thing, there’s aye a laugh in it, and no harm done——”

“Oh, Mr. McFadyen,” said Jessie, in great distress, “you must not talk like that; and

you must not speak of this any more ; we can be friends just as we have been for so long. And you must not think I am not sensible of your uncommon kindness, not only to us but to Allan—your helping him about the classes—and seeing about the new house for him——”

“It was for your sake, Jessie,” he interposed.

“But,” she said, quickly, “you will not let your relations with Allan be altered now, whatever else happens?”

“Whether it is to be yes or no from you, Jessie,” he answered her. “I’m not going back from anything I undertook to do for Allan, you may be sure of that. I’ll stand by him, if he should want a friend——”

Her hand stole timidly towards his, for a second, in mute token of thanks.

“But, Jessie,” he exclaimed, though still in an undertone, “I cannot see why it shouldn’t be yes. I have been coming about your house for a long while, and on the best of terms with you and your mother, and I’m sure I wasna noticing there was any one you had fixed your fancies on——”

“Oh, there’s no one—there’s no one!”

said Jess—and she was crying a little. “You need not think of that. It’s just that—well, I cannot explain—but, Mr. McFadyen, you have been so kind to us, to all of us, that I will ask something more of your kindness, and it is to put away that idea from your head, once and for all, and let us be the same friends that we have been for so long a time.”

The councillor hesitated for a second. Then he said—

“I will take your answer, Jessie, for the present. And I will not bother you. But I am a patient man—and I have seen strange things happen, through waiting. Only, I will not bother you, until you yourself give some sign.”

And therewith for a few moments they walked on in silence until they rejoined their companions, who were on the point of turning at the end of the sands; and together the four of them strolled back to the boat: and presently they had set off for home again, through an enchanted twilight—for now the golden moon had sailed into the lilac heavens, and golden was the pathway of flame that lay on the smooth water all the way over to the black shores of Kerrara. Clear and

lambent as the night was, none of them noticed that Jess had been crying.

And thus it happened that, not as bridegroom but as best man, Mr. McFadyen beheld the wedding-day approach; and indefatigable and important was he in the discharge of his duties; and handsome indeed were the presents he bestowed on the young couple. Then the little widow would not have her niece leave the house quite penniless—she must have her modest dowry; and Jess also contributed from her slender store—at the same time persuading Barbara that plum-coloured velvet was hardly suitable as a travelling-dress; and the shoemaker showed his interest and concern by calling once or twice to beg and implore them not to permit the use of alcohol on the day of the ceremony. Amidst all this bustle of preparation a most remarkable piece of luck (as she considered it) fell in Jess Maclean's way. She was not much of a reader of newspapers; and it was by the merest accident that her eye happened to light on an advertisement of the new number of a certain great quarterly, giving the list of contents; and there she saw, to her inexpressible joy, that the first article was entitled "The Volkslieder of Germany."

Within a couple of minutes she was out of the shop and on her way to the railway station.

“Can you get me that,” she said, showing the advertisement to the young man at the book-stall, “Can ye get me that and make sure that I’m to have it by the day after to-morrow?”

“I’ll try,” said he. “I will write at once.”

“No, no,” said she. “That will not do. There must be no mistake about it. You must telegraph; and I will pay you for the telegram.” She took out her purse. “Surely, if you telegraph now to Glasgow, the magazine should be here by to-morrow night, or the next morning at the latest.”

“Oh, yes; there’s little doubt,” the young man said.

“And you will send it along to me the moment it comes?”

He promised to do so; and Jess, her face radiant with satisfaction, hurried away back again. But she did not reveal to a living soul what she had discovered and what she had done.

The wedding-ceremony, as is usual in Scotland, was to take place in the bride’s home; and no doubt it would have been

quite modest and unpretentious but that Mr. McFadyen, by virtue of his office, overrode all their scruples and protests, and insisted on having things managed well and properly. He meant to show Jess that he could be as good as his word; and naturally he was a free-handed kind of a man; when, for example, there arose the question of getting help at the breakfast—the girl Christina having to attend over the way at the shop—he promptly solved the difficulty by going along to the Argyll Arms and engaging at his own cost two of Mrs. McAskill's waiters. Then he greatly pleased Barbara by consenting to arrange for an open carriage to take them from the house to the railway-station, whereas Allan had been pleading for a closed cab. And when the schoolmaster was grumbling and growling against the proposal to have speechmaking at the breakfast, Peter paid but little attention; speechmaking he would have; he was already priming himself by the study of a little sixpenny guide to that art.

At length the fateful day arrived; and the young Queen of Sheba was arrayed in all her splendour; and the minister was merciful as to the length of his address. Then, when

the simple rites were over, and a decent interval had elapsed, Mrs. McAskill's waiters appeared on the scene; the table was hauled into the room again; and presently there was furnished forth a quite elegant little feast—the presentation decanters, and the crystal, and the tiny bouquets of flowers making a most bright and cheerful show on the white cloth. The Minister presided; Mr. McFadyen acted as ‘croupier’; and when the small company had taken their seats, it was seen that the cunning councillor had so arranged matters that Jess found herself placed next to himself—Jess, whose friendly grey eyes were at their kindest towards every one present. All went merry as a marriage bell, indeed; the minister told humorous stories hoary with age; the councillor was so extremely facetious that the nimblest wit could hardly follow him; healths and toasts were proposed and answered; and Mrs. Maclean, though she was a little overawed by the presence of the two waiters, was nevertheless delighted with the careful way in which they handed round her trembling jellies. In the midst of this prevailing and joyous tumult a tall and melancholy figure presented itself at the door.

“Aw, it’s a sad sight—a sad sight!” exclaimed a mournful voice. “It’s a sorrowful thing to see two young lives beginning like this——”

The Councillor looked up quickly. He was just about to rise to ask them to drink the health of Mrs. Maclean; and he had the opening sentences of his speech ready and pat on the tip of his tongue; so that the interruption entirely disconcerted him.

“Well, what do you want?” he demanded, with his eyes glaring.

“It’s my duty to protest,” said Long Lauchie, regarding dismally the decanters and the glasses on the table; “I was thinking it would be like this—ay, and it’s a peetiful thing to see the two young people with ruin and destruction staring them in the face——”

“Oh, go to the mischief!” cried the Councillor—his eyes now fairly glittering with rage. “Here, you waiters, pitch that man down the stair!—fling him down the stair!——”

But Allan interposed. He rose and went to the door, and got hold of Lauchlan by the arm, and led him out.

“My good friend,” he said, “your zeal

does you every credit; but it lacks discretion. There's no drunkenness going on there, nor anything approaching to it. As for Barbara and myself, we are next door to teetotallers."

"Ay, that's just it—that's just it," said the shoemaker, with a deep sigh. "Ye do not understand your danger; ye think you're safe because of such treacherous guides as temperance and moderation; ye do not see that they are leading you to the brink of the pit. It's an ahfu' thing to think of, how near you are to perdition and disgrace——"

"Tuts, tuts, man!" said the schoolmaster, with angry brows. "Listen to me now. If you'll come in and sit down and have a bite and sup with us—water if you like—you'll be heartily welcome; but we wish for none o' this havering——"

"Ay, ay, just that," responded Lauchlan, with a lamentable shake of the head. "But I'll not trouble ye. I've done my duty. Maybe you'll see your grievous mistake before the destruction comes upon ye. I'm hoping that—yes, yes, I'm hoping that—for I wish ye well—I wish ye well——" And therewith he departed—as miserable a human

being as any in Duntroone; but at least he had done what he could; if the young couple were rushing on their doom, it was not for want of warning.

This brief interruption was soon forgotten among the general festivities, which were, indeed, prolonged until it was about time for the young folk to think of their train. Moreover it had been arranged that while the rest of the company should say good-bye here in the house, or at furthest on the pavement below, Mr. McFadyen and Jess, as the two special friends, were to drive in a cab to the railway station, to bid farewell there. When Jess and her companion arrived on the platform, she was carrying a small parcel wrapped up in paper.

There was no time to lose; the guard was coming along, examining the tickets. Barbara got into the compartment, and began assorting her travelling paraphernalia.

"Allan," said Jess, shyly, "I could not get you any wedding-present that I thought you would like——"

"What's that, Jessie?" he made answer, in accents of reproach. "When your kindness of these past weeks has been one continual wedding-present!"

“But I have brought you a little thing here,” she proceeded, “that maybe will please you—and surprise you—if you have been too busy lately to notice much in the newspapers——”

She undid the packet that she carried, and handed to him the new number of the quarterly that had been telegraphed for from Glasgow. He took it from her—and the next moment he gave a sudden little start of astonishment.

“God bless me,” he exclaimed, in a boyish rapture of delight, “they’ve given me the first place!”

And he would turn over the pages—or rather, the sheaves of pages, for the edges of the review were uncut—his fingers holding the sheets open, his entranced eyes following this or that sentence, this or that paragraph, as if it were all a marvel and wonder to him. He forgot about the urgent guard; he forgot about the thanks due to Jessie for her ingenious thoughtfulness; he even forgot about his impatient, and perhaps petulant, bride. And then amongst them they got him bundled into the carriage, his treasure clasped tightly under his arm; the door was slammed to; there was a shriek of a whistle, and the

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train began to move; finally came a fluttering of handkerchiefs so long as a certain window remained visible. Then Jess turned away.

“I’m going back to the house with you, Jessie,” said the councillor. “You and your mother will be a wee thing dull after so much excitement; and I just mean to take the privilege of an old friend to intrude on you.”

CHAPTER V.

FOREBODINGS.

HERE surely was an idyllic scene : a silvery lake stretching far away to the south—the ruins of an ancient castle on a solitary island—a fisherman standing up in a drifting boat and leisurely sending his line out and on to the quiet ripples—his sole companion (for the boy at the oars need not be counted) a beautiful young creature seated in the stern, whose pensive dark-blue eyes had wandered off from the book lying idly in her lap. An all-pervading silence was in the soft summer air ; if a heron made its heavy flight from one promontory to the next, it was on slow-moving and noiseless wings.

“Come, now,” said the schoolmaster to Barbara, who had spoken hardly a word during the last two hours. “You’ll do

yourself a mischief if you go on in that wild way, Barbara. Your high spirits will be the death of you. When you keep up such a rattle of laughing and joking, it is just bewildering to the brain." Then of a sudden he changed his tone. "But really now—tell me the truth, Barbara—do you really find it dull here?"

"There is nothing to see," she said.

"Gracious heavens!" he exclaimed. "Nothing to see! All around you lies one of the most beautiful lochs in Scotland; over there is the Pass of Brander; yonder is Kilchurn Castle; and above you are the slopes and peaks of Ben Cruachan. Plenty of folk would tell you that Loch Awe is about as near to fairyland as anything you could find on the face of the earth——"

"I do not understand the need of living in a farmhouse," she said, rather sulkily, "when we have a better house of our own that we could live in."

He was so astonished that he forgot to recover his line; the flies began to sink in the water.

"Do you mean that?" said he. "Would you rather go back to Duntroone now?"

"Yes," said she, curtly.

“ Well,” he proceeded, after a moment, “ people may wonder at our cutting short our honeymoon almost before it has begun ; but, indeed, it is none of their business. And there’s a great deal to be done to the house yet ; and I have some literary work I should like to begin hammering at.” He was slowly reeling in his line now. “ Maybe I have not been quite considerate, Barbara. Of course you could not be expected to interest yourself in trout-fishing—— ”

“ What is the use of catching fish that no one thinks of eating ? ” she answered him.

He was taking off the casting-line to wind it round his cap, for the better drying of the flies.

“ Yes, there’s always common sense in what you say, Barbara—always common sense in what you say. And I should have remembered that you might tire of a quiet place like this. You like looking at people. Well, we’ll pack up and be off the first thing to-morrow morning. And you’ll get on with the decking out of the house ; and I’ll take to my books.”

And thus it was that, to Jessie’s great surprise, when she was least expected, Barbara walked into the shop.

“Have you quarrelled already?” said Jess, laughing.

“Oh, no; but I was wearied of sitting in a boat and doing nothing,” answered Barbara. “And there are a number of things wanted for the house yet—I have a list here—will you come with me, Jessie, and help me to choose them?”

“If you are going to make your purchases in such fine clothes as that, Barbara,” said Jess, regarding her cousin’s showy attire, “they’ll be charging you the highest prices everywhere.”

“There is little advantage,” retorted Barbara, with a slight toss of her head, “in having nice things, and putting them away in a drawer, instead of wearing them.”

Jess was never very anxious to have the last word; her sole reply was to go and fetch her hat and jacket; and together the two cousins set forth on their expedition.

Now all through the furnishing of the house in Battery Terrace Jess Maclean had been the chosen adviser of the young couple; and lucky it was for them that she could spare the time; for Barbara’s ideas were of a large and liberal order; while Allan—always shy in money matters—was simply

unable to deny his betrothed anything. Generally speaking, when Barbara's childish love of finery and display was like to have led them into serious extravagance, some compromise was effected more in accordance with the schoolmaster's limited means. But on this particular morning, Barbara, now armed with the authority of a wife, seemed to know no restraint; whilst Jess, finding her remonstrances unheeded, became frightened at her own complicity.

"Barbara," she said, on coming out of one of the shops, "are you sure your husband would like your opening accounts in that way?"

"It is impossible to carry money in your pocket to pay for all these things," responded Barbara at once.

"I know there is nothing he abhors so much as debt," Jess ventured to say.

"Every one thinks that the classes will be growing bigger and bigger," Barbara made answer.

"But they are not meeting just now; and there is no income from them——"

"And that is why the people can put the things down in a book; and then, when the classes meet again, they will be paid."

"I hope at least you will tell Allan," Jess once more ventured to say.

"Whether I tell him or whether I do not tell him is of little matter—he has the use of the things I am buying as much as any one else." And with that Jessie's protests were for the moment dismissed.

By this time it was nearing a quarter to one; and Barbara said she would like to go into the railway station, to call at the book-stall.

"The book-stall?" repeated Jess, with some surprise.

"I was reading," her cousin explained, "that if you wish to make a parlour or drawing-room look home-like, you should put two or three illustrated papers about, and I may as well get them when I am here."

She got the papers, and had them rolled up; but when she came out of the station again, she said—

"Now we will go along to the South Pier and cross the bay in the *Aros Castle*."

"It will be quite as quick to walk back," Jess pointed out; "and you are not half through your list yet."

"But I would rather cross over in the

steamer," she said, impatiently; and of course a young bride, petted and spoilt by every one, expects to have her own way: Jess smiled assent, said 'Very well,' and accompanied her—not knowing what all this might mean.

She was soon to learn. For no sooner had Barbara got on to the upper-deck of the *Aros Castle* than she began to give herself airs of ostentation; she affected great gaiety of spirits; and wherever the Purser, in the pursuance of his duties, happened to pass by, she would manage somehow or other to be talking of the house in Battery Terrace.

"Can you see the curtains in the windows, Jessie?" she would say, as if she were oblivious of everything around her, and all intent upon straining her eyes towards the distant villa. "Maybe red is easier seen than anything else. Or maybe it is because Battery Terrace is above the smoke of the town that you can make out things or guess at them. I am going to have lace curtains up as well, when I have time. But the red looks very well, when you are passing along the Terrace."

Ogilvie paid no heed to her. He had greeted Jess Maclean when she came on

board ; Barbara he had ignored altogether—he did not even raise his cap. Whether or not he surmised that he was being ‘talked at,’ he looked sullen and annoyed.

But she forced him to take notice of her. For when they had crossed the bay and were approaching the North Pier, she went boldly up to him.

“How much for my cousin and me?” she said ; and she produced her purse, and took out from it a sovereign. In doing so she could hardly help displaying not only her wedding-ring but also the keeper-ring with its rosette of garnets.

“Oh, nothing, nothing,” he answered her—but his face had flushed red with vexation. For this was an open insult. She knew as well as he that there was no recognised charge for a mere passage from pier to pier ; again and again on former occasions he had asked her to accept the few minutes’ sail as a compliment.

“I wish to pay,” she said, coldly, and she offered him the sovereign.

Anger burned in his eyes.

“I have not enough change,” he said, shortly, and he turned on his heel and left her. When the gangway was shoved on

board, Barbara was the first person to go on shore, and she certainly had a proud and erect carriage. Jess followed—with some vague, half-alarmed notion that in the circumstances silence was best.

It was about eight or ten days thereafter that Allan Henderson went down to call on Mr. McFadyen. The servant-maid who opened the door told him that her master was in the yard behind ; so he passed through the house, and found himself in a large open space, the further end of which was occupied by massive stacks of coal, while at the nearer end appeared a smart little greenhouse. But it was the group in front of him that caused Allan's eyes to open wide ; for here was the chubby councillor standing in front of a large horse—a great, big, raw-boned creature, with prominent knees and shaggy pasterns—while hanging by was a long loutish lad who had the appearance of an ostler's apprentice.

“It's a present, what d'ye think !” said McFadyen to his visitor, as he contemplated with a curious expression of face this uncouth quadruped and its rusty saddle and bridle. “Dod, I think I could have done without it ; but, ye see, Mrs. Dugald up at the Rinns she declares that the beast is no manner o' use to

them now, since her husband died ; and she cannot bear to sell it, for it's an old favourite. Well, if I have to pay for its keep, I must make some use of the creature ; and at present I am getting the stable-lad here to bring it along for an odd half-hour, nows and again, so that I can practise mounting and dismounting. Man, it's grand exercise !—just famous !—and I tell ye I'll soon be a dab at it. See this now——”

He boldly advanced to the animal, and, without bothering about the reins, he twisted a tuft of the mane round the fingers and thumb of his left hand ; then he managed, with a little difficulty—for he was a short man and rather corpulent—to get his left foot in the stirrup ; with a clutch at the cantle and a spring from his right foot he rose in the air ; there was a moment of dreadful suspense ; and then with a brief but frantic effort he succeeded in throwing his leg over, while the protuberant part of his person, coming in contact with the pommel, prevented his pitching forward and down the other side. He was quite proud of the performance.

“Dod, I tell ye it's a grand exercise !” said he, sitting serene and happy in the

saddle. "It's fifty times better than twirling round a wooden bar. It's just splendid for the liver!"

And then he clambered down. And then he sprang and clambered up again; and all the while the patient brute only turned its head occasionally to see what was going on—never once did its ears fall wickedly back, never once did its hind heels lash out. Probably in its day it had beheld many strange things, the meaning of which had never been very clear to its poor old brain.

But at this point a stranger appeared on the scene, coming out from the house and bringing with him a tripod, a box, and a black cloth. At sight of him, the councillor, even in his pride of place, seemed to be a little uncomfortable—he even blushed somewhat.

"Ye'll not be thinking," he said to Allan, "that I want a photograph to show about and pretend I am a great horseman. No, no; but what I say is that a man cannot have any idea of what he looks like on horseback—it's impossible for him to tell what appearance he makes—until he has a photograph taken. Then he sees. Maybe his figure does not suit the back of a horse; and if that is so, it's better he should be aware of it;

and take to shoe-leather again. So ye'll not mind, Allan, my lad, waiting for a minute or two longer ; I'll be with you directly ; it's a quiet beast—there'll be no trouble."

There was no trouble. The sober-minded animal stood as if it were of bronze and set up in a public square ; Mr. McFadyen, for all his professions of modesty, maintained a lofty and commanding attitude ; the photographer got through with his work quickly ; and then, as the ostler-lad came forward to the horse's head, the councillor dismounted, and ushered his visitor into the house.

"And how are ye at home, Allan ?" he asked, cheerfully, as he threw open the parlour door.

"That's what I have come to speak to you about," the schoolmaster made reply, "if you can give me a few moments."

"Sit down and light your pipe, then ; I hope ye've the best of news," Peter observed, as he drew forward a chair and put the tobacco-canister on the table.

But the schoolmaster did not light his pipe. He seemed unusually grave and concerned ; and his eyes were bent on the floor. Presently he said—

"Maybe you could tell me this, McFadyen.

If you've been paying the premiums on a life-insurance policy for a number of years, what proportion of the paid-up money would the company give you back if you offered to surrender the policy? Have you any idea? This is how the thing stands: ten years ago I took out a policy—no great amount either—but I thought, if anything happened to me, it might make up to the old folk a little of the cost of my schooling and classes; and I've sent in the premiums regularly. And now I've been wondering how much they would return me if I handed over the policy——”

“Man alive, what are ye talking about!” exclaimed the councillor, with open indignation. “You, in your position, a young man just married, to be thinking of giving up your life-policy—ay, when ye should rather be thinking of doubling it! I'm just astonished to hear ye! And why come to me? I'll tell ye the one that has the first right to be consulted—I'll tell ye the one that has the right to forbid ye—and that is your young wife. Ask her, and she'll soon stop ye from any such preposterous madness.”

Allan did not raise his eyes from the floor.

He merely said, in a resigned sort of fashion—

“It’s on Barbara’s account that I am asking. Of course the policy belongs to her now; and she would rather have the ready money—at least I gather as much. You see,” he continued, and he looked up with some air of apology, “she has a fine courage of temperament. She is not nervously anxious about the future. And she’s young—she likes to make much of the present hour——”

McFadyen appeared to be wholly dumb-founded.

“It’s madness—it’s sheer madness!” he reiterated, with unmistakable conviction. “To sacrifice such a safeguard for the trifling proportion they would return ye! And what does she want the money for? Bless me, what does she want the money for? But no—it’s not my business to inquire.”

The schoolmaster rose from his chair and began to pace slowly up and down the room, his hands behind his back, his brow contracted.

“There are strange things in human nature,” he said, in a half absent kind of way, “and one has to make allowances.

And perhaps it's not so difficult to understand how a girl brought up as she was at Knockalanish, and coming to a place like Duntroone, should have her brain turned a little bit—for the time being—for the time being, I mean. Duntroone must have seemed a rich and splendid place to her; and perhaps it was but natural she should wish to dress with the best of them, and have as fine a house as others. She is by nature fond of pretty things, showy things; and it is hard to refuse her, when you see her as proud of her finery as a child might be. I'm not complaining. No. As for myself, I could willingly live on oat-cake and water—but—but I could not ask her to do that—I could as soon think of asking her to sell those bits of ornaments and trifles she's so fond of——”

“What does it all mean, Allan?” cried the older man, in something like consternation. “What has happened? Are ye not seeing your way quite clear before ye?”

“The way clear before me?” said Allan, suddenly, stopping short in his nervous paces to and fro. “God help us all, I see nothing but ruin staring us in the face!” And then he checked his vehemence. “No,

no; I should not say that. Maybe it is only temporary; her head is turned a little just for the time being; maybe her own good sense will show her that we cannot go on as we are living at present. But it is a terrible thing to have to remonstrate——”

“And it is a dangerous thing to come between husband and wife,” said Mr. McFadyen, “even with the best-intentioned of advice. But yet—yet I’m not such a coward as to keep silent altogether; and I tell ye, Allan, that to give up your life-policy would be most unjustifiable—would be downright wicked. It’s on her account I speak. It matters nothing to you—only that a man does not like to think that his wife will be left penniless in the case of anything happening to him. And that’s what I maintain—I maintain it—that you’ve no right to sacrifice such a safeguard, I don’t care for what purpose——”

“In any case,” said Allan, as he took up his hat again, “you seemed to think the commutation would be but a small affair?”

“That’s my impression—but small or large is not to the point,” McFadyen insisted, as he accompanied his visitor to the door; and he was still reiterating his emphatic counsel

when Allan, with many thanks, bade him good-bye.

But events were now about to happen that speedily put the question of the insurance policy out of the schoolmaster's mind.

CHAPTER VI.

IN PERIL.

It was next day about noon that Jess, hearing some slight noise in the front-shop, rose from her seat in the parlour, and stepped forward. She found Niall Gorach awaiting her.

“And what do you want now, you rascal?” she said, in her usual light-hearted fashion. “You are the fine one indeed—promising to give me a sight of the white stag in the Creannoch Forest——” She paused for a second: there was something uncanny about the appearance of the half-witted youth: his eyes seemed starting out of his head. “What is it, then? Have you seen a warlock?”

“It’s the other one,” he blurted out at last. “The black-haired girl—that was living here——”

“Do you mean my cousin Barbara?” said Jess.

“Ay, just that—and—and they’ve tekken her away to the polus-offus.”

“Oh, what are you havering about!” said Jess, good-humouredly: she was stooping to get some books out of a drawer, and not paying much heed to him.

“As sure as death—as sure as death!” Niall eagerly protested, now he had found his tongue. “They were tekken her down the street—a polusman on one side, and—and—McLennan’s shopman on the other—and they were going to the polus-office——”

Jess regarded him more seriously.

“If you’re telling me a story, I’ll give it to you!” said she. “But maybe some one has been stealing from Barbara’s new house; and I’d better go along and see what is the matter. Are you quite certain now they were going to the police-office?”

“As sure as death—I wass seeing them myself!” the lad insisted; and therewith Jess stepped into the back-parlour, told her mother that she was going out for a few minutes, and, slipping on some slight articles of attire, she left the shop.

Quickly, but with no great alarm in her

heart, she went along the front of the harbour, crossed over by the railway garden-plots, and approached the police-station. There was no sign of Barbara anywhere about. She hesitated for a minute or two, looking up and down; but this small thoroughfare, lying somewhat back from the rest of the houses, was wholly deserted; and so at length, overmastering a curious kind of reluctance, she forced herself to ascend the few steps, and entered. She found herself in a large, gaunt, bare apartment, the walls placarded with notices and regulations, a wide counter shutting out the public, a desk behind, and seated at the desk the sergeant in charge. He was a little, grizzled-haired man, with a sharp, observant, bird-like eye.

“Has my cousin Barbara been here?” said Jess. “That’s Mrs. Henderson—the schoolmaster’s wife——”

“Ay; and she’s here now,” was the laconic answer.

“Here? Where!”

“In the cells.”

“What is’t ye mean?” cried Jess—but rather faintly; and her face had grown suddenly pale.

The officer glanced mechanically towards the folio volume lying open on the desk beside him.

“She’s charged wi’ theft,” said he.

“But—but it’s a mistake!” Jess exclaimed, hurriedly. “And—and you’ll let her come away with me now; and if there has been a mistake, my mother and me will pay whatever is wanted. She’s a young lass; she’s not used to the ways of a town; and we will have it all put right before her husband can hear anything about it. Where is she? Can I see her? You will let her come away with me, and my mother will make sure that no one is wronged, even if there has been a mistake——”

The sergeant, as it chanced, was no ill-conditioned jack-in-office; besides, he knew the Macleans quite well by sight. And this young woman who now addressed him had pleading grey eyes and a soft and conciliatory voice.

“You should get an agent,” said he; “that’s the first thing to be done. And in the meantime you can see your cousin now, if you wish——”

“And she will come away with me,” interposed Jess, quickly, “before any one is

told—before her husband can hear anything about it ? ”

There was a shake of the head.

“No, no; not that way. The charge has been made against her. There’ll have to be the declaration diet as soon as possible; and both the Sheriff-substitute and the Procurator Fiscal are in the town; there’s no need for delay. But you should get an agent, Miss Maclean; that’s the first thing——”

“And Barbara—can I see her now ? ”

He turned to a constable that was standing by, and said a word or two to him.

“If you will follow this officer, he will take you to the cells,” he said to Jess—and thereupon he raised a portion of the counter to let her pass through.

It was hard on Jess Maclean that she had had no opportunity of preparing herself for this interview. All the circumstances were a bewilderment to her; she only knew vaguely that something terrible had occurred that must at any hazard be concealed from the proud and severe schoolmaster; Barbara, poor lass, had got into this incomprehensible trouble, but surely there was still a chance of spiriting her away before the neighbours’ tongues began to wag? And yet when Jess,

following the constable, stepped out into the exercise-yard of the prison, a cold chill struck at her heart. It was a dismal, deserted-looking place, this cindered court open to the sky and enclosed by lofty and sombre walls; and again, when she regarded the long, low, grey building in front of her, she perceived a series of small, isolated, high windows barred across with iron bars. She guessed that Barbara was behind one of these—the poor, fluttering wild-bird from the distant islands that had come wandering hither to this sorry doom. Nevertheless Jess was in no over-piteous and tremulous mood. By this time she had strung herself together. It was rescue she was bent on—ere Allan could hear of what had happened.

The officer who led the way rang a bell; and the door was opened by a big, burly, goodnatured-looking man in uniform, who proved to be the warder. Almost before he was told he seemed to divine the mission on which Jess had come; and at once he called his wife, handing her his bunch of keys. Presently Jess found herself being conducted by this woman along a narrow, dimly-lit, stone-paved passage, on one side of which were several doors, each marked with a

number, and each furnished with a small square aperture covered with a flap, as well as with a still smaller eye-hole commanding the interior of the cell. There was not a sound—not a sob nor a groan—to tell which of those silent and unknown cavities contained a broken human life.

At length the warder's wife stopped; she inserted a key into a large iron lock and undid the heavy bolt; and the next moment Jess beheld in front of her a small, bare, oblong chamber, at the further end of which, in the dusky twilight, and seated on a transverse bench, was a crouching and downcast figure, that made no sign whatever even at this abrupt interruption.

“Barbara!” she cried, and she flew forward, and went down on her knees, and took her cousin's hand in hers. “What is it! What has brought you here! What is the mistake about! Tell me—and we will get it cleared up at once. And maybe you would rather I did not send for Allan—just as you like, Barbara——”

A shiver seemed to run through the girl's frame.

“No, no—not him—not him!” And then she looked up strangely and fearfully.

“Jess, what will they do to me?—what will they do to me? Will Ogilvie get to hear of it?”

“I wonder you should think of Ogilvie,” said Jess, almost indignantly, “in trouble like this! What concern has he with you, or with us? But they’re saying I should employ an agent for ye—and maybe he will get everything put right before any one knows of it. And you have not told me yet what the mistake was all about, Barbara: how did you come here?”

Barbara was trembling from head to foot now; and her head was bent down.

“It was in McLennan’s shop,” she said, in a low and heavily-breathing voice. “It was a blouse—a silk tartan blouse—and they were saying I took it—but—but it fell from the counter. And then there was the policeman: they brought him in. What will they do, Jess?—what will they do to me? And will Ogilvie hear of it?”

“Oh, put Ogilvie out of your mind!” said Jess, as sharply as she could find it in her heart to speak to this hapless creature. “Have ye not Allan to think of first of all? And then my mother—what will she be saying, that has held up her head high

enough all her life long? But never mind, Barbara: I'm going now to get the agent: maybe I'll no be long before I'm back. You see, they'll not let me take you away home just at once; but the agent—surely the agent will manage it—and nobody be any the wiser. So I'll not tell Allan; and I'll not tell your auntie, either; my word, my word, if she was to hear of this, I'm thinking Mr. McLennan would be getting his kail through the reek, as they say in the south! So keep up your heart, Barbara—keep up your heart, lass!—and never you think about Ogilvie—there's others that's more to be considered than him.”

And then and swiftly Jess left this dreadful nightmare of a place, and sped away through the town, until she came to the offices of Grant and Lawrie, solicitors. She was fortunate enough to find the senior partner, who was a friend of Mrs. Maclean's, in his rooms; and forthwith she told her story.

“And will you get her out at once, Mr. Grant?” said she, gazing anxiously and earnestly at this tall, thin, sandy-haired man, whose quiet, attentive, steel-blue eyes seemed to respond so coldly to her urgent prayer. “The sergeant at the police-office he was

saying something about the Sheriff and the Fiscal; but surely there's no need of that when the mistake can be explained! The tartan blouse fell from the counter; and maybe they thought she had taken it; but she will tell you what really happened: and—and if there's anything to pay, my mother and me we will gladly pay it." In spite of herself some moisture gathered about her lashes; and she covertly put up her hand to remove the glistening drops. "It's only £3 10s., Mr. Grant!" she went on. "I know that, for Barbara was telling me about the blouse a week or two ago; and my mother would rather pay the money, ay, many times over, than have any disgrace come upon Allan——"

"There's no disgrace at all if she can be proved innocent," the lawyer interposed.

"But there is—there is!" said Jess, passionately. "There will be all the people talking—and think what that would be to one that's as proud and sensitive as Allan Henderson. And the young lads at the classes, they will be speaking among themselves. Mr. Grant, can you not get her away? Never mind what money it will be! ——"

The long, hard-visaged lawyer slowly rose from his chair.

“Just rest ye where ye are, Miss Jessie,” said he, “for a few minutes; and I’ll step along and see the Fiscal.”

So Jess was left alone in this musty-smelling chamber, with its rows of japanned-tin boxes. The solitary window looked to the back; and there were the steep slopes behind Duntroone, with their terraced gardens and an occasional walled-in villa. She saw a summer-house, too; and a young mother seated in front of it, knitting; while a small boy of five or six, to whom she called from time to time, trundled a toy-barrow up and down the gravel. There were some people who seemed to have never a care.

By-and-bye she heard a sound of footsteps on the staircase without, and her heart began to beat rapidly; but when the door was opened she perceived that Mr. Grant had returned as he went, unaccompanied.

“Where is she?” Jess demanded, breathlessly.

“In about an hour’s time,” responded the lawyer, as he leisurely resumed his seat, “or maybe less, she will be taken before the

Sheriff, for declaration. I will be there to look after her——”

“Could not I be with her, too, Mr. Grant?” Jess put in. “She’s used to me! She’ll be terrified going before all these people, by herself. Will you let me go with you, Mr. Grant?”

“Impossible,” was the answer. “The proceedings are private—and quite simple. There will be nobody present in the Sheriff’s room but the Sheriff himself, his clerk, the Procurator Fiscal, your cousin, myself, and a constable or two. And I will strongly advise her to say nothing at all. She will merely have to sign the declaration.”

“And she’s not coming back home now?” cried Jess. “When, then—when?”

“I can apply for liberation on bail, if you wish——” Jess eagerly assented. “—and if the Fiscal does not oppose, then we could find caution for her to appear at any diet she may be cited for——”

“Caution-money? Yes, yes, surely that!—there’s my mother—and Mr. McFadyen, that’s ever been a good friend to us—and Mr. Stewart, of the Steam Packet Company——”

“But I am afraid, Miss Jessie,” the lawyer

continued, bending grave eyes on her, "that your desire to keep all this hidden from your cousin's husband will not answer. I certainly think he ought to be informed——"

"But if Barbara is let out on bail," said Jess, in this last extremity, "could we not manage to get everything settled without it coming to his ears at all? Why should he be told? He can do no good. You will be there to look after her, Mr. Grant——"

There was little further time for argument: the solicitor had to return to attend to the interests of his client. Nor would Jess remain longer in this solitary room; she said she would rather go and wander about until she could meet him in front of the Court-house, to learn the result of his application for bail. And indeed, when she had parted from him outside the office, she neither knew nor cared in which direction her steps were turned. Blankly she gazed at the traffic going on in the harbour; at the steamers coming and going; at the shifting glooms and splendours that filled the world. For this was one of those rare days on this windy and changeable coast—a day of slow-moving sea-fog; and while for a time the silent white mists would come mysteriously creeping up

the Sound of Kerrara—obliterating headland after headland, hiding away the boats in Ardentrive Bay, and gradually smurring and blotting out craft lying still nearer at hand, so that amid the prevailing gloom stretching all around one waited to feel the first tingling touch of the rain—none the less would the interfusing sunlight begin stealthily and imperceptibly to declare itself again, the floating vapours would roll themselves into softly-rounded clouds, until here and there a space of calm blue sea would reveal itself, with the white sails of a schooner or cutter reflected on the perfect azure plain. It was all like a dream, like a vision, to Jess: the real thing she saw before her eyes was a narrow cell, a dusky figure downcast and shuddering, and a small barred window that seemed to shut out hope as well as the light of heaven.

Then, long before the appointed time, her unconscious steps led her along to the Court-house; and there she waited. The first person who came down the wide stone stairs was Mr. Grant himself.

“But where is she?” demanded Jess, in accents of surprise and reproach.

“She has been taken back to the cells,” he

answered her, with just the least touch of embarrassment. "The fact is, there are some peculiar features in the case; and the Procurator Fiscal—well, he rather opposed the application for bail; and the Sheriff declined. But it's of little consequence, Miss Jessie; we must just do our best for your cousin, and help her to clear herself of the charge; and in the meantime you cannot do better than let her husband know——"

"But—but what is to happen next?" said Jess, in blank dismay.

"There'll be the trial," said the lawyer, not quite meeting her eyes. "First of all there will be the Pleading Diet six days hence; and then the trial by jury nine days after that——"

It seemed to Jess as if Barbara were being inexorably withdrawn from them; as if she had been grasped in iron clutches; as if barriers, far more terrible than those across the small window, were being interposed between her and her friends. And now there remained nothing but for Jess to go away back to the shop, to let her mother understand what this was that had befallen them.

"Mother," she said, at the door of the

parlour—and she appeared to speak in almost a light-headed way—“you and I—we have had many years together—with very little trouble. There’s been many with far more trouble and suffering—and sorry enough we have been if we could not help. And now—now that we may have to take our share—like the others in the world—well, we must not repine too much—and—and we must face whatever is before us——”

The little widow had risen from her seat : it was not like the gay-hearted Jess to be talking in this half-hysterical fashion.

“What is it, Jess?”

Then Jess told her tale. But the widow, when she had heard the news, so far from being frightened, was moved only to violent anger and indignation.

“It’s a conspiracy—I tell ye, it’s a conspiracy amongst them, Jess,” she exclaimed, “to drag down our name into shame and disgrace. What harm have we done to any o’ them? And yet I can see it—first this one and then that—it’s McLennan now; but how long ago is’t since it was Boyd the jeweller—Boyd that came out of his shop and accused one of my girls of stealing a brooch from him?—I declare to ye

it's a conspiracy to bring disgrace on us, Jess——”

Nay, it was not the widow, it was Jess herself, who now betrayed a sudden alarm.

“Mother, mother, what are you saying?” she cried. “I thought that was all forgotten—forgotten by every one but me. And forgotten it must be by you now; there must be no word of it: do ye understand? Do ye understand, mother?” she went on, earnestly. “There must be not a word of that to any living soul. For there may be suspicion on every side now; and hunting up of bygone things; you would not injure Barbara, would you, mother, by speaking indiscreetly? We must be watchful and careful—and—and help Mr. Grant every way we can; and maybe he'll be able to get all of us—Allan, and Barbara, and ourselves out of this sore trouble.”

“Ay, and ye say that Allan has not been told yet?” her mother proceeded. “And who is going to tell him, then?”

Jess said nothing: she turned her eyes towards the floor, and some slight colour suffused her cheek.

“There's just none but yourself, Jess, and that's the truth,” her mother said. “Ye're

such a wise kind of creature ; and Allan will pay heed to you when he would not listen to any one of the rest of us. Will ye go up to Battery Terrace, Jess ? ”

“ If you like, mother,” she answered, after a moment’s hesitation. And presently she had set forth again—her eyes still downcast—for she had to consider, with some trembling apprehension, how she was to carry this message to the schoolmaster.

CHAPTER VII.

HUSBAND, WIFE, AND FRIEND.

WHEN Jess went up to Battery Terrace, and asked if the schoolmaster were at home, she was at once shown into the front room; but nevertheless she paused at the half-opened door; for she perceived that Allan, up by the window, was pacing to and fro, apparently in great agitation, while he looked from time to time at a letter he held in his hand. Then, when he became aware of her presence, he said hurriedly, and in something of a broken voice—

“Is’t you, Jessie? Ay, ay, you’re always at hand to help when there is trouble. And you’ll look after Barbara—I cannot imagine where she has got to—but you’ll find her, and tell her I had to leave for Glasgow by the four-thirty train. Read this letter, Jess

—read it—did you ever hear anything so pitiable?”

He handed her the double sheet of paper, and abruptly turned away towards the window. It was strange to find the usually stern and proud schoolmaster so bereft of self-control. Then her eyes followed the feeble, sprawling caligraphy that rambled across the blue pages.

“Glasgow, 48, Hamerton Street,

“Tuesday morning.

“DEAR OLD CHAP,

“This is my last message to you. I'm done. And yet it should be a message of congratulation; moriturus te saluto; I heard from Tom Dallas all about your wedding; and just about the same time I read your quarterly article, and I called out to you ‘Bravo!’ in a fit of coughing, and drank your health in a table-spoonful of doctor's stuff. But did not I always say it, when we were at college together, that you were one of the strong ones, one of the lucky ones; and now that ‘you've taen the high road, and I've taen the low road,’ all I can send you as a legacy is my share of the grand things we used to talk about and purpose doing.

Last night, in the middle of the night, in the darkness—with just a wee bit blob of red light at the tip of the gas-burner—I made these verses; and I thought them fine; for through the gloom I could see the dear old island, and the running seas all round it, and the white skies. Fine enough I thought them; ‘to mak a body greet,’ almost, when you’re lying alone in the dark and thinking of what you’ll never see again on this earth. Here they are:

In Colonsay my heart remains!—

Colonsay, ah, Colonsay!

My weary heart that went from me,

And fled afar across the sea,

Where the wild gulls are flying free

By Colonsay, ah, Colonsay!

And here am I with many pains:

Colonsay, ah, Colonsay!

The heavy footfalls in the street

Scarce heavier than my pulses beat:

The louring heavens the house-tops meet:

Colonsay, ah, Colonsay!

The people traffic in their gains:

Colonsay, ah, Colonsay!

Dear God, this is my only cry,

Show me but once before I die,

The long white sands—the silver sky—

Colonsay!—loved Colonsay!

But now when I look at them—as you will be looking at them—in the cold and unsparing daylight—I can see well enough what they are: not an atom of *spunk* in them—no more than there is left in myself—nothing but a sick, tired, aimless cry. And yet what I've been thinking is: If my old chum Allan Henderson would only say to himself—'*Mir träumt' : ich bin der liebe Gott.*' Do you understand, Allan? Will you take me to Colonsay?—there's the question, with its bold face of brass. The doctor talks about Torquay—he might as well talk about Terra del Fuego: I've neither the means, nor the strength, nor the desire. My old grandmother, the last of the stock, she still pretends to have faith in drugs and nursing; but I'm far past all that. No, there's only one thing left me to wish for in this world; and if you, my old friend, would come through to Glasgow, and if you would take me down to Greenock, and carry me on board the *Dunara Castle*, and maybe you would go as far as Colonsay with me, and help me out there, and lay me down on the sands, so that for a few minutes I could see the clear water again, and the white clouds, and smell the peat-reek coming along

from the cottages—ay, just for five minutes—then I would lie down and shut my eyes, and trouble no one any more. You need not think I am any weight to carry now; and you were always the best of us at the gymnasium; you would have nothing to lift along the gangway but a rickle o' banes. Will you do it, Allan, lad—for the sake of old times—and let me shut my eyes in peace——”

She did not need to read any further; she knew what had been demanded of him; she saw how all the old comradeship was calling upon him to respond to this piteous cry of despair.

“Well indeed I am sorry for the poor man,” said she, gently; but he broke in upon her in an excited sort of way.

“They're often mistaken—the doctors are continually mistaken,” he said. “Consumption is especially deceptive; I've known most remarkable recoveries. And who can tell—if I could get poor Alec taken away back to the island air—and the sweet milk and potatoes—and hearing his own tongue spoken around him——”

“But just now, Allan,” said Jess, timidly

regarding him, "your duty lies nearer at hand——"

And then, with her eyes anxiously watching him, she told him in a roundabout way of what had happened. At first he hardly seemed to follow her, so intently was his mind preoccupied with that pitiful sickbed in Glasgow; but at length he got to understand that some incomprehensible mistake had been made, and that Barbara had actually been arrested, and was now locked up in one of the police-cells.

"Yes, yes, it is as you say, Jessie," he answered her. "I cannot go to Glasgow. We must look after Barbara first, and get her out of this extraordinary mishap. And will you come down to the police-station with me, Jessie?—you seem always to know what is the best thing to be done."

She assented at once; he went and fetched his cap; and together they left the house. And even now he said something about the Glasgow train—showing that certain of his thoughts were still drawn away towards the dim sick-room and his dying friend. Then, by some effort of will, he seemed to recall himself.

"Tell me, Jessie, what this frightful

blunder is all about : what is it they accuse Barbara of stealing ? ”

“ It’s a blouse in tartan silk,” Jess made answer ; “ and I can see very well how the error may have arisen. For Barbara was speaking to me several times about that blouse ; she had a great fancy for it ; the Royal Stewart it was, and very pretty in the silk ; and if she had asked them to show it to her again, and if she was getting other things, then what more likely than that it might have been dragged away by her sleeve, and might have slipped off the counter, and fallen on the floor—— ”

“ It is simply inconceivable that she should try to steal it or want to steal it ! ” he exclaimed. “ Simply inconceivable ! Even if it were in her nature to covet and steal, where could the object have been ? She has had everything she could think of—nothing grudged her—why, it was only yesterday that I was asking Mr. McFadyen if I could commute my life insurance policy just to leave her a little more free in her expenditure. She is fond of finery—we all of us know that ; and fond of appearances—well, who was ever blaming her ? It always seemed to me a pretty kind of thing to see

her decking herself out—a kind of childish vanity that was harmless enough; and there was no one checking her and finding fault with her, so that she should take to secrecy or underhand ways to appease this innocent craving. Jessie, it is not believable! If she had come to me I would have bought the silk tartan blouse for her, ay, even if I had to sell the half of my books——”

“Poor girl!” said Jess. “To think she’ll have to be in that terrible place for two whole weeks yet before she can be proved innocent and set free!”

They went down through the town; and Jess Maclean had got into a way of regarding the passers-by furtively and suspiciously—as if wondering whether they knew. It was not like Jess; but she seemed already to feel that some black shadow of disgrace hung over her and hers, no matter what the jury might say. And she did not talk much to Allan; these present events were too serious, too tragic, to admit of idle gossip, or even of make-believe professions of assurance and confidence.

Jess and her quiet and simple straightforwardness had found favour in the eyes of the Superintendent; when she and her

companion entered the police-station, he at once called a constable and bade him conduct the visitors through to the cells. The warder's wife also proved to be friendly; as soon as she had gone along the narrow corridor, and turned back the heavy bolt, it was clear that she meant her espionage to be entirely perfunctory; while Jess, with just as little mind to be a spectator of the meeting between husband and wife, remained with her, trying to frame an indifferent sentence or two. Allan advanced into the cell alone.

And yet there was no wild scene: Barbara did not spring to her feet and rush into her husband's arms, eager to seek shelter there from all the perils that encompassed her. Nay, when she saw who this was, she rather cowered away from him, until he went forward, and sate down by her, and took her hand in both of his.

"This is a sad affair, Barbara," he said to her, gently, "but we will soon get you free, and no great harm done. And did you not tell the McLennan's people they were making a mistake? Or maybe it was this way—maybe you were frightened—and not quite so quick with the English as the Gaelic—

and very likely they would put a wrong construction on your confusion and alarm. But I will point all this out to Mr. Grant; you were bewildered for the moment, no doubt; and not ready with an explanation in English——”

She appeared hardly to listen.

“Is Jessie there?” she said, in a low voice.

“She is just outside the door—with the woman that has the keys,” he answered her. “But you can tell me anything you like, Barbara—they are not hearkening——”

“I want Jess to come in,” she said.

He rose from the bench and went to the door.

“Jessie,” he said, “will you go to her? She wants you. And you know better than I what to say.”

For a second Jess Maclean seemed to hesitate; it was like an intrusion between husband and wife; but the next moment she had stepped into the cell, while Allan shyly lingered without.

“Now you’ll be of better heart, Barbara!” said she, cheerfully. “You’ll be of better heart now, with your husband come to stand by you.”

“He was not so angry as I expected,” the girl responded, without raising her eyes.

“Angry? Who thought he would be angry? Who gave him the right to be angry? That is a fine thing to think of! Are we angry with any one that has a slate fall on him from the roof—or that is knocked down by a runaway horse? Angry because of an accident? It is hardly a time to be angry! No; but I am sure of this, that he is very, very sorry, as we all are; and every one of us will be doing our best to make amends to you, Barbara, when once we have got you set free, and the sooner that hour is here the better!”

Barbara remained silent for a little while; then she said—in an undertone—

“Will the people be coming into the Court when there is the trial?”

“I suppose so,” said Jess, doubtfully. “I’m not sure—I will ask Mr. Grant—but I think any one can come in that likes——”

“And they will be looking at me?” said Barbara, with a kind of shiver. “Jessie, could you be with me? Would they let you do that? Could you come and sit with me?”

“If there’s any one to be by your side, it ought to be your husband——”

“No, no—you, Jessie!” she said, hurriedly. “You. Could you come here for me, and go into the Court with me, and stay by me? I am frightened, Jessie—and the people will be staring; but if you were with me, it might be different—a little different. And did you say any one that liked? Any one? Mr. McFadyen, maybe?——”

“And if he did,” said Jess, warmly, “be sure he would come as a friend!”

“Ay—him—but there might be others—there might be others not so friendly—others may be glad to see you in such a position.” She glanced towards the partly-opened door. “Jess,” she said in a whisper, “do you think—Ogilvie—will be among the people in the Court?”

And Jess also glanced quickly towards the door: happily she could hear that Allan was talking to the warder’s wife.

“I wonder at you, Barbara!” she said, under her breath. “It is not of Ogilvie you should be thinking at such a time!”

Some few minutes thereafter Jess Maclean and Allan left together; and there was little speech between these two—there was none at all on the part of Jess, indeed, for her latest interview with Mr. Grant, the solicitor, had

aroused in her certain strange misgivings, that for the present at least she kept resolutely locked away in the unconfessed recesses of her mind. But as they crossed over by the railway-station, there was some slight disturbance—one or two laggard travellers hurrying to the ticket-office, the half-past four train for the South being just about to start.

“Poor Alec MacNeil!” said the school-master, in an absent kind of fashion. “But I will telegraph to him. And if everything is going well with Barbara, then maybe after all I’ll be able to run through to Glasgow, and see if I cannot get him taken away to his beloved Colonsay.”

And Jess—whose first thought was ever and always for him who was at this moment her companion, and for his lonely life—that now seemed to be lonelier than it had ever been before—Jess said in quick communing with herself:

“A good thing. For if this matter goes ill with Barbara—if the worst should come to the worst—it will be some distraction for Allan that from time to time he must needs keep thinking of his distant friend.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLEADING DIET.

DARK and sinister rumours and exaggerations of rumours went flying through Duntroone with regard to the unhappy young woman now under arrest ; and while the friends and acquaintances of Mrs. Maclean indignantly scouted these fatuities, they nevertheless rather refrained from looking in upon Jess and her mother : to offer sympathy in present circumstances might prove to be invidious ; on the other hand, when the verdict of acquittal had been pronounced, they could come forward to tender their congratulations without reserve. The little widow said nothing, but she was well aware of this temporary desertion ; occasionally, when she thought nobody was by, a tear would trickle down her cheek ; and the small well-worn

Bible that she kept in the back-parlour now frequently took the place of the county paper. Once, when she had been summoned across the way, she left the volume open on the table; and, when she had gone, Jess slipped round to see what passages her mother had been communing with. These were the verses that caught her eye: ‘Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. . . . For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, . . . Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him. . . . O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.’

Not that all her neighbours held aloof. One morning Long Lauchlan the shoemaker called, stepped into the parlour, and, unasked, took a seat.

“I am sorry, Mrs. Maclean,” said he, in English, “for the trouble that has come upon your niece Barbara. Ay, I was jist fearing something of the kind might happen. For when her father’s funeral was getting near to the cemetery, at Knockalanish, there was a black collie ran right across the road in front of us; and we couldna put down the

coffin from our shoulders to chase after the dog and get him killed; and when we came out again we could not see the beast anywhere; and more than one was saying ‘Well, until that dog is killed there will be ill-luck for the family of poor Donald Maclean.’ That’s what they were saying; and that is what has come about. But we must jist do for the best; and it’s me that’s wishing to help; and when the poor lass is brought to the trial—well, I would like to be a witness to character——”

“You, Lauchie?”

“Ay, me,” continued Lauchlan, detecting no surprise in the widow’s tone. “And you would be astonished, Mrs. Maclean, if I was telling you the proportion of Rechabites there is to the people of this country-side. And do you not think that out of the fifteen jurymen there will be three or four Rechabites?—ay, and mebbe the chancellor of the jury himself? Then they will see me—and I hef been made a Guardian of our Tent—I am an office-bearer——”

“I’m sure I’m glad to hear of anything that keeps you from the whisky, Lauchlan,” said the widow, absently.

“Me!—Mrs. Maclean!—the whisky?”

ejaculated Lauchlan, sorely hurt. "I wonder you would say that! Mebbe in former days I might tek a glass when they were hard at me and forcin' me to it; but now—now—ah, me, my good friend, I wish I could get ye to understand what a perfect heaven upon earth the strict teetotalism is! It is so, indeed! Aw, but it's sweet, sweet, to rise in the mornin', and there's no thirst in your throat, and there's no fearful seeckness in your inside, and your head is as clear as a bell—ye must try it—I'm sure ye would be thanking me if ye'd only try it, Mrs. Maclean——"

"Haud your haverings!" said Jess, breaking in angrily. "My mother's as temperate as any one in Duntroone—and far more than most——"

But Lauchlan shook his head, in a despairing way.

"She doesna belong to the fold yet. There's ahlways the fear of backsliding. I hef myself seen a bottle standing on that very table now before me. And at the wedding—there was sad doings at the schoolmaster's wedding—I sah the glasses and the bottles spread out—fearful—fearful——"

“We’ve a great many things to think of at present, Mr. MacIntyre,” said Jess, sharply.

“Ay, jist that,” responded Lauchlan, with good-natured acquiescence, and he rose from his chair. “Ye’ll not forget, then, Mrs. Maclean, that I’ll be a witness to character, if the lawyers want me. Ye see, I’m in an official poseetion now. And there’s sure to be some Rechabites on the jury—mebbe the chancellor himself. Well, good-bye to you; and to you, Miss Jessie; and I am hoping there will be good luck at the trial, in spite of the black dog that ran across the funeral at Knockalanish.”

But the one friend who at this crisis stood indefatigably and assiduously by them was distinctly the town-councillor. Mr. McFadyen, eager, important, restless, buzzed about the little parlour, and hurried along for consultation with Mr. Grant, and hurried back; and all his talk was as of one learned in the law; he fairly astounded the women with his display of legal knowledge—about the precognitions of the witnesses—the warrants for citations—lists of articles labelled and to be produced—service copies of indictments—pleas admitted in bar of trial—objections to relevancy of the libel—and so forth;

and Mrs. Maclean, if she did not quite, or even half, understand, was at least profoundly grateful for his intervention and championship. Jess, on the other hand, silent and watchful, began to suspect that a good part of this brave magniloquence was used as a cloak of concealment. He could not, for example, be brought to give them precise details of the story told by McLennan the draper. He would rather come back to the mere mechanism of the trial; and above all he would insist that neither mother nor daughter should go to the Court-house on either of the two days.

“What could you do?” he said, addressing himself especially to the widow. “The Pleading Diet in particular is a mere matter of form. Barbara will simply have to say she is Not Guilty; and then she will be taken back to the cells, to await the real trial. There’ll be no jury for you to look at, to see if there might be a friend or two amongst them. And forbye that, Mrs. Maclean, I’m sure ye would just be shocked and distressed beyond measure at the common-place, ordinary, business-like character of the whole proceedings. You would think the people heartless. And so they are, and necessarily

so ; the law is a machine, of cogs, and wheels, and levers ; and it turns out this, or turns out that, without caring a straw. Dod, I tell ye the fellows can sign away a poor creature's life just as if it was a barrel o' raisins—— ”

“ Mr. McFadyen,” said the widow, “ where will they put my poor lass ?—where will she be, when she comes before all the people ? ”

Mr. McFadyen was silent for a second, and his face burned red ; none the less he was equal to the occasion ; he managed to answer her without mentioning the word ‘ dock.’

“ Oh, well, Mrs. Maclean, it's this way,” he said. “ She will be in what you might call the well of the Court ; Mr. Grant will be there, and the Fiscal, and the Sheriff-clerk at the table ; and if she is in a kind of pew by herself, you see that is like the jury—they have boxes for themselves along one side of the central square. It's the Sheriff who is the big man — he is up on the platform—— ”

“ She'll not be in a prison-dress ? ” asked the widow, with troubled looks.

At this the councillor laughed, strenuously and stormily.

“ Prison-dress ! ” he said. “ In the eye of the law she is as innocent as you or me !

Prison-dress indeed ! The only prison-dress ye're likely to see about anywhere in Duntroone the now is the over-all Johnnie Stevenson has for saving his clothes up on the links ; and indeed an angry man at golf is the better of some such covering, when he's striking and smashing half the county of Argyll into the air."

At length the morning arrived on which Barbara was to appear in court for the first time ; and at an early hour Jess stole away up to the house in Battery Terrace. During these past few days she had been in the habit of paying hidden little visits, especially at such times as she thought the schoolmaster was likely to be absent, so that she could see that things were being properly looked after. But on this occasion, when she had finished with the maidservant, she sent word to Allan to apprise him of her being there ; and as soon as he had made his appearance the two of them set out together, making down for the town. And very speedily she discovered that her companion was bitterly impatient over the law's delay.

"What is the object of all this tomfoolery ?" he demanded. "The prisoner should be allowed to plead 'Guilty' or 'Not Guilty'

when the first declaration is made ; and the case brought for trial directly—or with a fair time for getting the witnesses together. Just think, Jessie, of these days and days going by ; and poor Alec MacNeil in his lonely lodgings, wondering why I do not come for him. Of course, I could not tell him the real reason. He would not believe such a story. Do you remember, Jess?—he was accusing me of being one of the lucky ones ! Ah, well ; perhaps some night he may fall asleep ; and when his eyes open, they may find before them shores whiter even than the shores of Colonsay——”

“ Allan,” said Jess, after a moment, “ could I not be of some use ? Could I not go through to Glasgow ? My mother knows the Captain of the *Dunara Castle* very well ; and if I could get your friend that is so ill taken as far as Greenock, then I am sure he would want nothing in the way of kindness——”

“ Ah, no, no, Jessie,” he said, hastily. “ That is where I would like to be myself—giving poor Alec a last chance ; but you—you must be here—we could not be without you here ; when Barbara wants anything done for her, it is you that she

asks for. And I do not wonder—I do not wonder.”

They were now nearing the Court-house; and as Jess Maclean’s quick and apprehensive scrutiny told her that there were certain idlers gathered about the entrance, scorn and black hatred burned in her heart, and were only too visible in her eyes as well.

“The dolts!” she said, between her teeth. “Have they no work to do, that they must come to stare at a poor creature in distress!”

But the schoolmaster took no heed of these people—no more than if they had been empty wheelbarrows and pickaxes cumbering the highway. He went by them unnoticing; he ascended the wide, hollow-sounding, stone steps; he entered the lofty, bare-looking hall; and took one of the nearest seats, making room for Jess beside him. Here, also, two or three spectators had assembled; but they were mostly strangers; for the rest, Lauchlan the shoemaker had come along, in his Sunday clothes; and from one of the farthest back benches the elfin eyes of Niall Gorach glowered and twinkled.

At this moment the well of the court, the dock, the witness-box, the jury boxes, and the raised platform on which stood the

Sheriff's chair of office and his desk—all these were as yet empty ; the business of the day had not begun. And it may be said that the appearance of this provincial hall of justice did credit to Duntroone ; the pew-like benches and the woodwork generally were of polished and shining pitch-pine ; the walls and roof were bright and clean ; there were tall and well-proportioned windows looking both to the south and west ; and if most of these windows were dimly blinded over, at least one of them gave a view of the clear outer world—beyond the roofs of the huddled houses was visible the distant azure sweep of Ardentrive Bay, above that again were the sunny slopes of Kerrara, and over these the pale-blue mountains of Mull, those of them that lie about Loch Speliv and Loch Don.

But presently this one and that of the officials began to come in, making for their accustomed places by the central table : the Sheriff-clerk, the Procurator - Fiscal, the agents, and the like ; while Peter McFadyen, after a final word with Mr. Grant, slipped into the pew next the dock, taking his seat by the side of Allan Henderson. Jess was trembling a little. She seemed to know that the eyes of the people behind her were

directed to a certain door in front of her—over by the corner of the hall; and she also was listening for footsteps. What the lawyers in the well of the court were doing mattered nothing to her. She was half-afraid to find Barbara appear. Would there not be some terrible reproach—some accusation even—in the mute glance of the prisoner? For they had received this poor lass in charge, when she was left destitute out in the far island; and was this what they had allowed her to come to?

Then her heart stood still. The red pine door at the corner was opened. A policeman led the way. Next came Barbara; and at the first glimpse of her Jess thought she looked fearfully ill; but was it not that her eyes, grown accustomed to the grey twilight of the cell, were partly blinded by this unexpected glare? She followed obediently, and was directed into the dock; and if, during these few yards, she had managed to take some brief and shuddering survey of the people assembled, it was done so swiftly as to escape notice. Her eyes appeared to be fixed on the ground as she passed in to occupy the chair awaiting her. She remained with her head bent down. She seemed to

pay no attention—to make no effort to understand all this that was going on in court: the various formalities—the questions put and answered—the business-like, half-apathetic conversation with the prosecution and the defence.

But of a sudden the strangest thing occurred. Her eyes must have been wandering a little, however coweringly and fearfully; they must have been attracted to the window that gave a view of the shimmering blue sea, and the yellow slopes, and the pallid azure mountains of Mull; and to this poor imprisoned creature a sight of the far hills was as the sound of the Alphorn to the Swiss soldier in the Strassburg trenches. She uttered a piteous little cry. Involuntarily she stretched forth her hands, and she would have risen from her seat and made in some wild way for that vision of the shining free world without.

“Let me go!” she exclaimed, in a panting, half-choked voice that thrilled those who heard. “Oh, let me get out—let me go!”

Jess could not reach her; Peter McFadyen was bewildered, and knew not what to do; it was Mr. Grant, her agent, who stepped

quickly across from the table, and put his hand gently on her shoulder.

“Be still—be still now!” he said in a loud and persuasive voice—for the Sheriff, in all the severe majesty of wig and gown, had had his attention attracted by this slight disturbance, and was now regarding the prisoner curiously. “We will do our best to get you out. Indeed, indeed we will. You must just sit quiet, and attend to anything that may be asked of you. And when you are called on to plead, you know what you have to say.”

And so she withdrew her hopeless eyes from the warm splendour of that outer world; she sank into her seat again; and resigned herself to what was going on. But she did not seem to comprehend, any more than hitherto, what that was; and they did not bother her very much; when she was called upon to plead ‘Guilty or Not Guilty,’ she succeeded in uttering the two words required of her, and these were forthwith recorded by the clerk. By-and-bye the policeman at the end of the dock opened the small door and intimated to her that she was now to leave; his brother officer, who had been standing just behind her during the proceedings,

prepared to follow ; and thus escorted the prisoner moved away out of the sight of her friends, disappearing down the narrow stone staircase communicating with the yard and the cells.

Jess and Allan Henderson descended together into the front street.

“ Jessie,” said he, “ do you not think I might go through to Glasgow now ? You see how aimless all this routine is ; and there is nothing further to be done until the jury-trial—when they will pronounce her innocent, and set her free. I can be of no use. On the other hand, the cry of a dying man rings in one’s ears—an appeal from a death-bed is not to be thrust aside—— ”

“ Poor Allan ! ” said Jess. “ I can see how you are torn two ways.” She hesitated for a moment. “ But maybe—maybe it would be safer for you to ask Mr. Grant. He might wish to consult you. Then if there’s nothing more to be done about the witnesses—then you might hurry through to Glasgow, and at least show to your friend that you were not heartlessly neglecting him.”

A stealthy step came following her : she was touched on the arm.

“ You need have no fear,” whispered the

crouching Niall Gorach ; and he spoke eagerly in the Gaelic tongue. "It is I that will get her out of the prison, this night. As sure as the Good Being is above us, I am telling the truth. And the *Selma*—the *Selma* will be leaving the North Quay at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, for Tobermory and the outer isles ; and will you be there to take your cousin down into the cabin, so that no one will see her ? —— "

Jess turned to the loose-witted youth.

"What cantrip is this now, Niall ?" said she. It was no time for folly ; and yet she could not bring herself to speak harshly to the lad.

But already Niall had left her side : he was making across the highway towards Long Lauchie—towards Lauchlan the regenerate and respectable, who was walking solemnly homeward in his Sunday clothes.

CHAPTER IX.

A BREAKING AND ENTERING.

BUT Long Lauchie was obdurate. He refused to listen to these mysterious and insidious hints; he forgot all about old alliances and adventures; nay, from the lofty heights of his new-found virtue, he sternly admonished this gangrel-youth.

“What are you growing up to?” said he. “It’s the gallows will be the end of you—I’m sure of that. No lessons like any other lad—no apprenticeship to any decent trade—hiding and jinking about the country like a gipsy——”

“If we could get the black-haired lass out of jail,” said Niall, with his eyes burning eagerly, “and sent away by the steamer to-morrow morning, it’s Mrs. Maclean and Jessie Maclean would be fine and glad of that. But

it would need a great deal of thick twine—a fearful lot—and rosin——”

“Away now!” said Lauchlan, scowling. “I’ll have nothing more to do wi’ you and your tricks. I tell ye, it’s the gallows will end you—son of the devil that you are!”

Well, Niall was in nowise cast down; his discursive wits were nimble, and had already contemplated many alternatives; he would manage to get cord and twine somehow. And in the meantime he drew away from these straggling groups of people; he left the town by the Soroba road; and at last, when he had got up on the summit he clambered over a wire fence and entered a plantation of young larch and fir. Amongst the thick undergrowth he searched for and found a worn and tattered game-bag that he had hidden there on the previous day; and with this in his hand he crept still further into the twilight of the wood, and disappeared.

It was a long while ere he returned to the fence; and the first objects that caught his sight were three children returning from school—an elder girl of thirteen or so, and two younger ones. As they came up, he stepped out into the roadway.

“Daftie!—daftie!” called one of the small imps—and ran away laughing; while the other one, half-giggling and half-frightened, as quickly ran after her. This behaviour on the part of her charges seemed greatly to shame and annoy the elder girl, who was a quiet, wise-like little woman of fair complexion and timid, large blue eyes.

“You’ve been at the school?” said Niall to her.

“Yes,” said she, still blushing hotly over the misconduct of her companions.

“Mebbe you can write?”

“Yes.”

“That’s a strange thing, now,” continued Niall; “a wonderful strange thing that you can put words down on paper, and tek them away, and they are as good as a message to any one. Will ye show me now?—will ye show me how ye do it? See, here’s a piece of paper—and mebbe you’ve a pencil—let me see you write what I will tell you; and when I get to Duntroone, I will be asking them if they can read it.”

Perhaps the small lass felt that she owed him some little piece of civility; at all events she brought out her pencil and wrote for him the words he dictated, which were these:

‘If you can use the file, at the window or the door, and get into the yard, you will find a rope hanging over the wall.’

“But that is silliness,” said she. “No one will understand that.”

“Aw, it will do very well,” said Niall, in an offhand fashion. “I am sure I am wishing I could write myself.” And with that he folded up the bit of paper, and put it in his pocket; leaving the small maiden to continue on her way and overtake her companions—whom she probably slapped well for their impudence.

Niall’s next encounter was with *Lucais fiar-shuileach*—that is to say, cross-eyed Luke—the keeper, who was coming along with a brace of setters at his heels.

“What’s in your bag, Niall?” he called out. “After the young black game, you scoundrel?”

“Oh, no, Mr. Innes, I would not do that; there’s nothing but sticks!” said Niall—and of his own accord he opened the large and ragged bag.

But the keeper was not suspicious. Niall was an old acquaintance and dependent of his, receiving from him many an odd job in the shooting season, for among all the youths

and lads about there was none so indefatigable in beating through the woods as Niall Gorach. And on this occasion Niall had not lied; the bag was really half-filled with sticks; the only thing was that if Lucais fiar-shuileach had been a little more particular in his examination he would have perceived that these pieces of wood were carefully cut about the same length, and that each had a notch incised at the middle. The squint-eyed keeper resumed his march, carelessly whistling the praises of the Lass of Loch Etive; while Niall, shouldering his bag again, proceeded down the hill, until he neared the swampy morass lying at the back of the town.

Now all round this neighbourhood there is a wide tract of land chiefly given over to the goods department of the railway—detached wooden sheds, sidings for trucks, and the like occupying the loose space in a kind of promiscuous manner; while generally there are one or two of the clerks or porters coming or going, because of the short-cut to the next platform. Accordingly Niall Gorach made his way across this outlying suburb without attracting any particular attention; nor did any spying gaze follow

him as he drew nearer and nearer to the wall surrounding the exercise-yard of the police-prison. Arrived there, his movements were rapid; for he at once proceeded to get the sticks out of the bag, placing them in little handfuls along the base of the wall, where they were effectually screened from view by the rough herbage—docks, sorrels, ragwort, and so forth—that grew luxuriantly about. Curiously enough, in this place of coverture there was also a long row of stones of considerable size that had apparently been carefully secreted there; indeed, if these stones had been sufficiently dark to resemble coal, any inquisitive passer-by might very warrantably have imagined that this youth was bent on some daft project of setting the whole of the police-buildings on fire. However, Niall, having deposited these pieces of wood behind the tall weeds, slung his bag over his shoulder, and, with an apparently vacuous look on his face, set out for the back-street in Duntroone that afforded him a small den of a lodging. He had first of all to get some scrap of food; and then to wait for the night.

But it was a long waiting, at this time of the year. The evening and the sunset came

together—a fiery sunset that burned fierce and wild behind the Mull and Morven hills ; then that was succeeded by a clear and lambent after-glow, in which the plum-hued mountains became dark and vapourous ; ten o'clock arrived, and the heavens and the sea had grown to be of a pale, ethereal lilac ; nevertheless, far away on the still plain, here and there a small jet-black speck of a boat showed no sign of returning. Niall was down on the beach now, talking to Angus MacIsaac ; both of them, with more or less of resignation, regarding one of those distant dots. From the trees below the ancient castle came the sharp, harsh cry of the tawny owl, and along the higher woods in the east sounded a more-protracted and softer *too-hoo-hoo-hoo* !—a strange and unearthly call that found an answer somewhere in the gathering twilight. The Maiden Island was of a keen and sharp-cut ebony against the slow-fluctuating and visionary mists lying about Lismore. A three-quarters moon had come up and over the Sound of Kerrara, and underneath was a long and vivid pathway of golden flame, narrowing and widening here and there, until it seemed to lose itself in a sprinkled radiance among the spars and

rigging of the small cutters moored close by. And at last, through the magical silence, came the first muffled sound of oars.

Nor yet did Niall leave his companion; not until the smooth-gliding boat had finally been brought in and hauled up on the beach. Then Angus MacIsaac, his day's work over, briefly said good-night and went away home to his supper; while Niall, now deeming himself secure, made straight off for the wooden house in which MacIsaac kept his dismantled craft and also his store of ship's-chandlery.

This long, low shanty was erected on a piece of waste ground immediately behind the Great Western Hotel; so that, when Niall reached it, it was obscure and almost invisible in the gloom thrown by the greater building. The half-witted lad's movements had clearly been premeditated. From a hidden corner he picked up his game-bag; by means of the fence belonging to the hotel, he easily clambered on to the boat-house; the window in the roof had been left open for ventilation, and he still further opened it; he shoved his legs and body through, and swung himself down inside; from the bag he took out and lit a dark lantern; and now he found himself in this place of strange

forms and vague shadows, with its all-pervading odour of paint and tar. Then, aided by the bull's-eye of the lantern, he began his eager exploration. It was cordage he was in quest of—by preference cordage about the thickness of the signal-halyards of a small yacht; but it was evident that he was not very scrupulous in his harryings. Cordage new or old — guy-ropes — mizzen-sheets — nothing came amiss; until, finally, he sate himself down in a sheltered place behind an old boat, and there, by the light of the carefully shaded lamp, he began to cut all his tackle into equal lengths, firmly tying near the middle of each length two of the notched pieces of stick, with about a foot's width between them.

It was an arduous and tedious task; but Niall was resolute; and eventually he had both of the large pockets of his game-bag crammed full with those lengths of cord. Thereupon he extinguished the lamp; he slung the bag over his shoulder; he mounted on the upturned keel of a boat and managed to spring cat-like to the joists supporting the roof: from thence he clambered through the window, slid down, and dropped to the ground below.

But by this time there was a white moonlight filling all the world ; the esplanade was startlingly distinct ; and the silence was so profound that the almost glass-like sea could be heard murmuring for a great distance round the smooth bays and the rocks. Middle of the night as it was, Niall dared not go along that exposed front, nor risk attracting the attention of some stray policeman by even the most stealthy of footfalls. By a circuitous route he got away to the back of Duntroone ; he followed a winding valley, and climbed up, and passed through the woods of Ardconnel ; and then, cautiously descending again, drew near to the environs of the goods-station. Here, even if he were perceived, he would not be so much remarked ; he would most likely be taken for some official of the line going about his nocturnal duties.

Presently, in the same furtive fashion, he had crept up to the lofty wall surrounding the exercise-yard of the police-buildings ; and now he was tolerably safe, being in a black shadow cast by the strong moonlight. Forthwith he set to work. He got out the long lengths of cord ; and to the end of each tied one of the big stones he had previously

concealed behind the docks and thistles. When he had a number of these engines prepared, he thought he would try one; so, getting to his feet again, he took the stone in his hand and heaved it over the high wall. There was but a slight noise as it fell on the ashes on the other side. Then he took the hither end of the cord, and began hitching with it a little, until he had got one of the pieces of stick on each side of the top of the wall, which, fortunately for him, was protected neither by glass, nor spikes, nor any sort of chevaux de frise. His calculations had been made with sufficient accuracy. The near end of the cord, hanging down, just about touched the weeds.

The paramount question was—how many of these stones must he needs get over in order (along with the friction of the pieces of wood at the summit) to withstand his own weight, slight as that might be? But then he had ravaged Angus MacIsaac's boat-house to some purpose; the abundance of signal-halyards, guy-ropes, jib-sheets, and the like, tempted him to make surer and still more sure; until, in the end, standing upright, he began to plait and overlap these strands into some rude resemblance of a cable. Thereto

he was in a measure aided by the sticks at the top; but anyhow, if the scaling-ladder was of the simplest and most rough-and-ready description, it at all events promised to bear his weight.

He pulled; nothing gave. He hauled still more determinedly; everything seemed secure. And then he began to ascend—warily—twisting his feet round the rope—and fending himself off with knee and elbow. At first his progress was easy enough; but higher up the strain on the intertwisted cords was rather bad for his knuckles; nevertheless the pieces of wood helped; and at length, with one hand on the smooth and conical summit of the wall, he managed to raise himself so that he could peer over into the yard. There was no sign of life anywhere. The open square was of a pallid and silvery grey; so was the front of the one-storeyed wing, the small barred windows of which revealed the whereabouts of the cells; but the other buildings were in an intense shadow, along which any interloper might creep with comparative impunity. And now Niall Gorach, grown bold, threw a leg over the wall; and took up his position there—with all this white and spectral universe

around him, with the solemn peaks of Ben Cruachan, too, rising into the far and clear heavens, beyond the dusky and wooded hills. Perhaps he did not notice that the metallic splendour of the moonlight, touching sea, and cliff, and house-front, was already beginning to yield to a more ordinary grey-ness, especially up towards the east. Niall was busy. For the sake of his own escape, or for the escape of the captive whom he had come to release, he had to reverse the ingenious mechanism by which he had practically gained entrance. He had to un-plait the improvised rope; with each strand he hauled up a stone, to be dropped on the outer side of the wall; and then, when he had roughly reunited the cords on the inner side, and made sure that the outer weight held, he quietly slipped down the cable, and found himself in the yard.

But now he could mistake no longer: the new day was near: the cold and penetrating light was gradually dispersing those sombre shadows. And how was he to tell which of the row of small, barred windows was the one that held imprisoned the black-haired girl? How was he to communicate with her? How was he to convey to her the file,

concealed in the breast of his jacket, that had round it the pencilled message? He could pitch the file through one of these windows easily enough; but it might fall into an empty cell. Niall looked back to the twisted cords: it might after all be better to make good his own retreat—until he should have acquired more accurate information.

The next moment, in the mystic hush and silence of the grey dawn, there was a sudden rattle and clamour as of twenty parks of artillery, simultaneously bursting forth into roar and flame. Niall cowered under the doorway leading to the Court-house; and remained there, breathless and motionless. Presently, after this loud and harsh unbolting of locks and bars, the big, stalwart warder stepped out into the open; he was clad only in trousers, shirt, and waistcoat; he had obviously come forth to have his morning pipe in the fresh air; and he proceeded to strike a match on the clay bowl. The head of the lucifer dropped off and fell at his feet; with a friendly curse he flung the stem after it; then he rummaged in his pockets—in vain; then he turned and went inside again, leaving the ponderous door open. It was Niall's opportunity—come what might. He

darted across the yard, and entered; he listened for the warder's footsteps; he took the opposite direction—which led him right into the corridor of the cells; and as he now heard someone coming from the other end, he dodged into the only corner available, which chanced to be the bath-room. Here there was a vast display, not only of towels, but also of coloured blankets; and as these were arranged in shelves, Niall, by throwing himself prone on the floor, and creeping underneath, he found a hiding-place of admirable security. Moreover, he could see what was going on without.

The new-comer who had startled him now made her appearance; it was the warder's wife, a good-natured-looking woman; and it was in a friendly voice that she said, when she had lifted the flap of the small aperture in the door of the nearest cell—

“Good-morning!—and I hope you slept well. And I'm sure Miss Jessie will be coming to see you the day.”

What the reply was Niall could not hear; but this was enough for him; the black-haired lass was there—in the cell close by; and as soon as the woman was gone, what could hinder his passing in the file, with its

written directions? And if she were but quick-brained and active, surely she could soon get rid of the trifling stanchions across the window? And then the plaited rope awaiting her—and the busy day not yet abroad—the fair-haired cousin looking for her down at the pier—and the *Selma* about to sail for the outer isles?—all was going well now, and he had done what he could to repay the many little kindnesses and friendly looks of Jess Maclean.

Alas! at the very moment of success and triumph he was baffled and captured—and captured most ignominiously. For just as he had stolen into the corridor and was in the act of raising the leather flap so that he might drop the file into the interior of the cell, the warder's wife chanced to return; and without any scream, but with astonished eyes, she flew forward at this stranger and seized hold of him, at first by the collar, eventually by the ear.

“You—you young sinner—is it you, Niall Gorach—and how have you come in here! And what was that you were doing? . . . Are you there, John—John!”

In answer to the summons the bulky warder came sedately along; and when he

saw who this was, he seemed inclined to take a humorous view of the case.

“ Well, well, you young weasel, you have got in ; but how are you going to get out ? And how did you get in ? Did you come through the front office ? For if you did, it’s there you’re going back ; and we will see what the sergeant will be saying to you. Was you ever hearing of Paul and Silas ? ” continued the warder, as he inserted his knuckles under the collar of Niall’s jacket. “ Paul and Silas, that had many stripes laid on them, before they were cast into the prison, and had their feet made fast in the stocks ? Was it that you were after ? Well, no matter, we’ll go and see the sergeant.”

So the unhappy Niall was haled away ; and when they had left the building (this time the warder took care not to leave the door open behind him) he was taken across the exercise yard, and so into the police-station. There was a constable walking up and down ; the sergeant sate at his desk reading a newspaper ; an old charwoman was on her knees at the front steps, scrubbing the red sandstone.

“ What are we to do with this rascal ? ” said the warder, dragging his captive in with him.

The reply was unexpected. With a sudden twist and a spring Niall flung himself on to the intervening counter ; the impetus carried him right across the smooth surface ; he lit, not on his head, but on his hands—knocking over the old woman and her pail ; and the next instant he was upon his feet and with the speed of a hare making away for the south end of the harbour and for the crags and bushes under the Gallows Hill.

“ Will I run after him ? ” cried the dumb-founded constable to his sergeant.

But the sergeant leisurely grinned.

“ Run after Niall Gorach ? Ay. And mebbe you would try to catch a squirrel by climbing a tree ? It’s the devil will catch him, and no other ; and I’m thinking old Beelzebub will hef his hands full, when that time comes ! ”

CHAPTER X.

ASPHODELS AND GOWANS.

WHEN the servant-lass Sarah appeared at the door of Mr. McFadyen's office and announced that Miss Jessie Maclean had called and had been shown into the parlour, the councillor betrayed an instant alarm.

"Dod bless my soul!" he exclaimed—heedless of the presence of his clerk. "Without the least intimation! Is everything trim, woman? Is everything redd-up and respectable?" Then he remembered something—and his vexation broke forth in vicious terms: "Ye stupid idjit, how long is it since I was telling ye about the curtains and the sofa-cover!—how long is it since I bade ye take them off and send them to Perth to be cleaned? But no—no!" he continued, as he hastily passed his hands over his topmost and scant locks of hair. "Never a thing done!

All ye're fit for is to stand glowering ! And what on earth are ye glowering at now ? It doesna occur to ye to whip off and bring in some tea ? Ye never heard of such a thing as tea, I suppose ? Ye never saw a teapot, I'll be bound ! A great, glowering baggage—a great, glowering, staring, open-mouthed gowk—” But while the councillor was excitedly and angrily dusting his coat-collar with his silk pocket-handkerchief, Sarah the servant-lass had with much equanimity turned away and betaken herself to the kitchen. In her own language she ‘never fashed her heid about a daft man.’ If tea had to be prepared, hurry was the most likely thing to spoil it. And the parlour was just as tidy as it ordinarily was : if any one wanted it better, notice should have been sent.

But the town-councillor was far from being waspish and truculent when he passed through from his office to the dwelling-house part of the premises. He welcomed his unexpected visitor with quite an excess of courtesy and gay gallantry ; until Jess, who was of a simple and straightforward turn of mind, rather put these unnecessary professions aside.

“Mr. McFadyen,” said she, regarding him

with her grey eyes, "I want you to tell me : are you hiding anything from us ? Is the case against Barbara more serious than Mr. Grant and you would have us believe ? Why has he nothing for us but vague assurances that mean nothing at all ? I do not object to your saying little to Allan Henderson—poor Allan ! you see he's very childish and perverse in some ways ; he does not understand—and will not understand ; he has but the one mood just now—a fuming impatience that they should be so long in setting Barbara free ; and when she is set free—well, then, I should not be surprised if he took a thick stick in his hand, and marched straight down to the haberdasher's shop, and broke the stick over McLennan's shoulders. It would be just like Allan—he is that unreasoning and masterful—he thinks that justice should be done somehow——"

"Na, na, but not that way !" cried the Councillor, anxiously. "We've had enough of cells, and charges, and prosecutions ; I tell ye I never get a glimpse o' the Court-house, but a shiver runs down my back. I'll be thankful for the time when we can look on the whole o' this as an old story—half-forgotten——"

But Jess was not to be put off.

“Mr. McFadyen,” said she, “what were the things that the police took away when they went up with McLennan’s man to search through Barbara’s boxes and drawers?”

“Oh, well,” said Peter, evasively, “a few articles—the Procurator Fiscal has them in charge, and they are all sealed and labelled. Of course Mr. Grant has the right of access to them—no mistake about that—he is entitled to see the productions, as they are called; but what I maintain is that, as the accused’s agent, he ought to have access to the precognitions as well. For I would ask ye this,” continued Mr. McFadyen, gaining in breath, and in importance, “how are ye to meet a charge unless ye know particularly and in every point what the charge is? The information that Her Majesty’s Advocate, the Right Honourable John Blair Balfour, puts into the indictment is precious little; as a friend of the prisoner, I want to see what evidence is going to be led—and I maintain that is what the law should allow me. However, we can make a bit of a guess here and there; and these things ye speak of, they can help too—there’s the red parasol, for example——”

“Yes, the red parasol?” Jess repeated, quickly.

“Well,” said Mr. McFadyen, after a moment’s hesitation, “they may be trying to make some idle story about that too; but your cousin declares that she paid for it—and that she remembers, for you gave her the money——”

“I did?” said Jess—and for the briefest second she looked utterly dismayed. But the next instant she had pulled herself together. “And—and if I did—why not?” she demanded, with pale lips. “It was before she was married——”

“That’s just it,” returned the Councillor, whose pride of knowledge was leading him into disclosures. “Mebbe they will be trying to show that at that time she had no money to afford such things——”

“But if I had!—if I had!” exclaimed Jess, who had recovered from her temporary trepidation. “Barbara knew well enough where to come; she would not think of hesitating; my purse was hers; there was the money for the parasol, or for anything else she wished, always ready for her——”

“I’m sure of that—I’m sure of that,” said McFadyen. “And no doubt Mr. Grant will

be giving you a hint what questions he will ask of you at the trial—if the prosecution should chance to take that line, and if you should be wanted. And you must not worry yourself or be anxious, Miss Jessie; precognitions or no precognitions, we'll do our best——”

There was a tapping at the door: the large, rubicund, gooseberry-eyed servant-lass appeared, and ushered in another visitor—it was the schoolmaster.

“I was told you had come here,” said he to Jess, forgetting to make any apology for the interruption. “And—and I have but a few minutes. Will you read this?”

He put a telegram into her hand: these were the words she found before her—

‘Good-bye. Not able to write. Alec.’

“You see I have no alternative,” the schoolmaster continued, hurriedly. “I must go through to Glasgow at once; there is just time for me to catch the train. Only, I wanted to say a word to you, Jessie——”

“Will you let me walk to the station with you, Allan?” she responded promptly. “Then you can tell me on the way what it is you want of me.”

“Will you do that?” said he. “Ay, but

you were ever and always the goodhearted one!"

Jess nodded a friendly farewell to the councillor; and the next minute she and Allan were passing quickly along the harbour-front, conversing in low tones, their eyes occasionally glancing towards the clock at the railway-station. Yet it was no elaborate request he had to make; it was merely that she should seek the earliest opportunity of gaining an interview with Barbara, and explain to her why he had been thus hastily summoned away. Also, would Jess do what she could to lighten the burden of this inexplicable imprisonment? But he knew she would do that—she could not help it, he said to her—it was in her nature.

She accompanied him along the platform, where the guard was urging the last of the passengers into the carriages. As Allan stepped into a third-class compartment, he suddenly paused for a moment, and began to search one pocket after another.

"You've forgotten your pipe!" said she.

She saw that her surmise was true; and in another second she was off and down the platform to the tobacconist's stall, where she

was able—being known to the lad in charge—to pounce without question or delay on a wooden pipe and a packet of bird's-eye. When she returned to the carriage, the train was already in motion. She handed her parting gifts in at the window.

“And you'll look after Barbara?” said he.

“That will I,” she answered, “as well as I can.” And she waited until the slow-moving string of carriages had crawled round the curve, and was hidden from sight.

This was the afternoon train for the south; and by the time it had panted, and shrieked, and thundered its way inland by the shores of Loch Etive and through the Pass of Brander, the wide, silver-rippling, and glancing waters of Loch Awe had begun to assume a slightly golden hue, rendered all the more brilliant by being visible through the pendulous branches of the birch-trees. As the evening drew on, there was up by Glen Dochart and Glen Ogle a yet warmer light shining along the shoulders and peaks of the lonely mountains; later still, the dark Loch Lubnaig, down in its hollow, had a touch of crimson among the purples and greys that crept into the trembling reeds; and still later, the brawling Leny, the widening

Teith, the smooth-flowing Allan Water caught here and there, from the overhanging heavens, a glimmer of saffron and rose-red fire. And then, as he left behind him the last of the Highland hills and Stirling rock; and as he got further and further down into the Lowland plains, then 'the sun set, and all the ways were overshadowed;' and when he got into Glasgow town, a pervading blue-grey mist had filled the thoroughfares, and the gas-lamps were being lighted.

He did not stay to secure any lodging for himself; he made straight for the address he had brought with him; he entered the dusky 'close' and ascended the sombre stone stair. He rapped at a door, and was referred to a floor above. Arrived there, he rapped again; and an old woman appeared, bearing a candle—for now it was practically night.

"I am Allan Henderson," he said—fearing to question.

"Well, well, indeed," said the ancient dame, in an accent that sounded friendly in his ear; "he'll be glad to see you—wake as he is, poor lad. Many's was the time he was speaking of you—ay, will you come in now—and not mek mich noise, in case he is sleeping——"

He followed her into the lobby, taking his cap into his hand ; and then, after a moment or two of surveillance, he entered the room she indicated. The eyes of the sick man—which were singularly large, and clear, and lustrous—lighted up with pleasure ; a worn smile of welcome appeared on the white and sunken cheeks. The old woman brought forward a chair ; but Allan went to the bedside, and took his friend's hand, and remained standing.

“ Alec, lad, this is not right—this is not what ought to be,” he said. “ What have they been doing to you in this great town ?—we'll have to get you away to Colonsay, after all—— ”

“ Sit down, old chap,” said the other, in a labouring and husky voice. “ And do not burden your soul with lies, Allan ; you never were good at it ; and you never were a good actor either. You must see I'm dying. What about that ? Sit down and let's have a bit of a friendly confab, as in the old days. I sent ye a silly cry—man, ye should have paid no heed to it—— ”

“ Come, come, now,” Allan interrupted, as he took the chair that was close by. “ I'll not have ye talk in that fashion. I should

not wonder if your own instinct was the best guide after all—that ye should be off to have a look at the seas and the clouds about Colonsay——”

“No, no,” MacNeil said, quietly. “The long pantomime’s coming to an end. The pantomime with its demons and evil chances—its hopes and adventures—its sham and shimmer of love-business even: all coming to an end, and what one is waiting for is the transformation-scene. And after?” For a second he glanced with a curious look at his friend. But in those strangely-brilliant eyes there was no sort of delirium—nor any trace of agitation or apprehension: what little life was left him was burning away quite clearly, peacefully, complacently. Nay, there was even a frail touch of humour about the pallid lips as he continued: “Mind, it may stand well with me that I have always been respectful about the older deities: I remembered Baudelaire. Heine was wise too: ‘*Mensch, verspotte nicht den Teufel*’—though maybe that’s carrying prudence to an extreme. Anyhow, I’ve always held the great old gods in high respect; and who knows, when I go below, but they may let me wander through the twilight in a

harmless kind of way, looking at the famous ghosts. The heavy-browed Homer for one—if he's still blind, I could lead him about, man!—and Ulysses, still thinking and dreaming about Sicily—and Achilles—Achilles sure to be weeping and bemoaning himself—would rather be the slave of the meanest hind on earth than the lord of all the phantom-dead. But Nausicaa, now—what do you say, Allan—if one were to come anywhere within sight of her playing with her maidens—well, I think I might have cheek enough to step forward. I don't think I could help it. 'Madam,' I would say to her, as humbly as she might wish, 'Madam, I am but a poor Scotch student; and yet if you will permit me, I would like well to stand by the stream, and bring you back the ball, when it chances to fall in.' Allan, lad, what colour is the asphodel?"

The schoolmaster, startled out of a reverie, could not say: he muttered something about the bog-asphodel of this country being a small spiked flower, of a yellow colour.

"The asphodel down there must be purple—to suit the twilight," Alec MacNeil went on—garrulous even in his huskiness, and perhaps too much rejoiced over this visit of

his old chum. "Purple—ay—and tall, and lily-like—for the huge Orion to go crashing through the meadows, after the wild beasts. But Allan, tell me this now: is't not likely—supposing I were to gather a handful of the asphodels—a whole handful of purple asphodels—do ye not think I would be ready enough to give the lot of them in exchange for just one single gowan—a gowan found away up on Cathkin Braes—in the white light of a May morning? Man, do ye remember how white the mornings were—Sunday mornings mostly—away out by Cathkin and Kilbryde and Eaglesham?—ay, and not to be despised either, the other mornings, when we could take a turn nearer at hand—out by Maryhill or that way—before coming back for Kennedy and his high Oxford sing-song—up Maryhill way—do ye remember the farm-house—and the glimpses of the Argyllshire hills far out in the west—and the fancy that the tops of them were looking across to Jura, and Colonsay, and the Atlantic waves——"

The watchful old grandmother came sidling up behind the schoolmaster's chair, and said in a whisper—

"Check him, sir—check him; or he'll be bringing on the cough again."

Allan held up his hand.

“Well I remember,” he said; “well I remember the white mornings—and Cathkin Braes—and many a silver gowan and yellow buttercup. But, ye see, Alec, fine things of that kind are rather exciting to think of—and you’ve done talking enough now——”

“You’re not going—after a mere minute or two!” the sick man exclaimed—pantingly and piteously.

“Nay, I’ll stay with ye for a while—until your grandmother puts me out maybe,” Allan rejoined; “but it’s I must do the talking now, and I’ll tell you all about my small affairs and adventures, since the time I went to Duntroone.”

And this he did—for a good half-hour or more; and in a blithe and lightsome fashion, the better to interest and amuse this friend of old days. What terrible conviction may have lain lurking behind all this assumed cheerfulness was for his own heart alone.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE EVE.

NEXT day he went up again to Alec MacNeil's lodgings. Distracted enough he was. On the one hand, he dared not remain longer in Glasgow, for Barbara was to come before the Sheriff the very next morning; on the other hand, it seemed impossible he could tear himself away from this poor wretch, whose eyes, with all their affectation of mirth and content, had a strange, involuntary pleading in them. It was MacNeil himself who sought to set his mind at rest.

"Away home, Allan—away home now," he said. "And take this comfort with ye, that you'll never see the island of Colonsay—however far off on the horizon it may be—just a gray line—a bit of thin transparency—I say you'll never see Colonsay without remembering that you did the last possible

kindness to an old friend and a dying man. It was more than I could expect. Railway fares are something to a School Board master—ay, and one that has a young wife and a house to think of; and if you had but said good-bye in a sixpenny telegram, it would have been enough——”

“Be quiet now, Alec,” said the other, sharply. “I tell you, I’m desperate vexed I have to leave you again this afternoon; you see, the holidays are coming to an end now, and I must have everything ready—for my classes as well; but then, I can come back—man, I can come back!—and we’ve not done yet with the project of taking ye to Colonsay, and trying you with fresh milk and new potatoes—and your native air around you——”

The sick man shook his head, and there was some wan make-believe of a smile on the wasted face.

“You forget, Allan. I’ve an appointment. I’m due. I must be waiting in the meadows, among the half-black asphodels; and when those Phæacian young creatures come along, I’m ready, I’ve got my bit speech prepared for the light-footed one at their head: ‘Madam, I pray you to forgive my accent;

but if I can make myself understood at all, a poor Scotch student would take it as a favour if you would let him stand down by the stream and stop the ball for you.' ”

“ She could not refuse ! ”

“ Oh, well,” said he, with a sigh, and he turned away his head, “ there may be some strange doors unlocked for me before long. I wish I could send ye word, Allan.”

When, on the evening of this same day, Allan Henderson returned to Duntroone, he found the ever-faithful Jess awaiting him on the platform. Jessie's eyes may have been somewhat concerned and apprehensive ; but outwardly she was bearing herself with her accustomed quiet.

“ What's the news, then, Jessie ? ” said he, as he stepped from the train.

“ Oh, nothing—nothing particular,” she answered, “ only that all of us are naturally a little anxious—anxious that everything should go right to-morrow. And Mr. McFadyen, he has been as busy and hard at work as Mr. Grant himself—about the witnesses to character ; and if the jury will believe Barbara's story—and how can they otherwise ?—how can they but believe it ?—there will be no trouble at all.”

"Could we go in to see her now?" he asked.

"I am thinking it is too late now," Jess said, with some embarrassment. "And, besides, they are maybe not so friendly towards us since Niall Gorach tried to get her away——"

"What nonsense!" the schoolmaster exclaimed, impatiently. "Are they afraid of the silliness of a crack-brained creature like that?"

"Perhaps they are not liking that any one should have been able to get over the wall," Jess suggested.

"Why, then, do they not put spikes on the top?" he demanded.

But it was not Jessie's business to devise means for the better security of the prison. She had already secured her point. She had led him away from his proposal that they should endeavour at this unusual hour to gain access to the cells; and by the time they were leaving the railway premises he had taken his place by her side with unconscious submission. Stubborn and fractious as he was with most, he invariably yielded to Jess—and never knew he was yielding. It seemed natural to him to do as she wished; for there was always a shrewd and kindly

common-sense in what she said—even when she was flouting and merciless. And if Jess was now taking him along with her to press on him some bit of supper, why, he obediently and unheedingly went; though supper was about the last thing in his thoughts.

And yet it was no mere hospitable stratagem that had made Jess solicitous to get the schoolmaster carried away home with her. Earlier in the day she had seen Barbara—in the pale twilight of the cool, clean, quiet, terrible cell; and when she had suggested that perhaps Allan might return from Glasgow in time to obtain admission, Barbara had shrank back from that prospect with something like dread.

“No, no,” she had replied, in a low voice—so that if possible the warder’s wife might not overhear—“I am not wishing to see Allan any more now, before the trial. They have been asking me questions—and I have been thinking—maybe—maybe something will happen to-morrow.”

“Yes, indeed!” cried Jess—with at least a profession of great confidence. “What will happen to-morrow is well-enough known. Your story is quite clear, Barbara—they can do nothing but admit their mistake——”

“But you will keep Allan away,” continued Barbara, as if not hearing. “You’ll keep him away, Jess! And then to-morrow—if something should happen—if they say I took the blouse—or any of the other things—then where is it they will be sending me? Can you tell me, Jessie? It is away from Duntroone? Is it where I would not have to meet Allan again? Would they let me go—without having to face him——?”

“I hardly understand what you mean, Barbara,” said Jess, slowly. “Do you mean if—if—the law should say the evidence—was against you? Do you mean a conviction?”

“Yes,” was the answer, uttered in a whisper; and she was hidden and cowering, with lowered head.

“Well, then,” said Jess, recovering herself—and now she spoke boldly—“if the law should find you guilty—justly or unjustly, if the law should find you guilty, Barbara—there is but the one place for your husband to be, and that is by your side. And that is where Allan Henderson would be, in such a case—that I know well—I know the man that he is—I know where he would be. And why should you distrust him, Barbara?”

Why should you fear him? Since ever you two came together, he has had eyes for no one in the world but you. He has given you everything—grudged you nothing—the temper and stiffneckedness he many a time shows to others he has never shown to you——”

“But—but I had never brought shame on him,” was the response, in half-smothered accents—and her hands were clinched now over her knees. “I am frightened of him, Jess. Jess, Jess, I’m frightened of him!—and you’ll be sure not to let him come here this afternoon; and to-morrow—well, to-morrow, if they are sending me away to jail, where is it?——”

“The jail?—in Glasgow, I suppose,” said Jess, half-stupefied.

“Ah, and then I can get away without seeing him!” she cried, in the same exhausted voice. “And I’ll never come back, Jessie, I’ll never come back again to any of you!—because of the shame.” Tears gathered in the beautiful, out-sweeping black lashes; a sort of infantine piteousness trembled about her mouth; she rocked herself to and fro. “Why was I ever coming to Duntroone? Why did they bring me here, if there was no

more home for me at Knockalanish? But I'll go away now—I'm going away now—and I'll not come back to bring shame on anyone——” And so she would have continued, in despair and childish self-com-miseration, but that Jess Maclean was by her side, hushing those wild words, and drawing towards her the downcast head with all its splendour of raven hair, now so sadly despoilt and dishevelled; and strangely enough the greatest comfort Jess seemed able to afford was the reiterated assurance that Allan Henderson, whatever time he might arrive from Glasgow, should not be allowed to come near.

And even at this eleventh hour the indefatigable Peter McFadyen had not yet done. While all the rest of the world had come forth from the houses to wander hither and thither by the sea-front—for gossip, and smoking, and to watch the jet-hulled rowing-boats move about the wide golden plain—the Councillor was making his way along one of the smaller back-thoroughfares, until he paused at a certain entrance. Then, in an apparently offhand way, he glanced up and down the street—but indeed the place was practically deserted; and when at length he

dived into the entry and made his way up the dark staircase, he met no one at all; not only that, but on reaching the top landing he found the door in front of him open, while a profound silence prevailed. He hesitated. It was like as if he had come on a fool's errand. But the next moment there came from the adjoining room the sound of a voice—a loud, raucous, monotonous voice, with the additional sound of some one pacing up and down.

“*Je vous salue, Monsieur,*” proceeded the unseen monologist. “*Comment va la santé? Oui, je me porte à merveille, Dieu merci—et toujours prêt à vous servir. Des draps? Parfaitement! Mais, asseyez-vous—asseyez-vous donc, monsieur! J’ai des draps d’Angleterre, d’Allemagne, et de Belgique de toutes les couleurs et de bonne qualité. Voici un drap superfin, et bien tondue. . . . Monsieur, c’est le dernier prix, je vous assure. . . . Mais voyez cette autre pièce, peut-être vous conviendra-t-elle davantage. . . . Non? . . . Voulez-vous que je vous fasse voir des couleurs mélangées?—*”

Mr. McFadyen held back no longer: he knew this was his man. He passed into the lobby, and knocked at the door of the nearest apartment. The French phrases ceased;

there was a half-uncertain 'Come in!'; and therewithal the councillor entered the room.

He found before him a young man of about two-and-twenty, with a shock-head of sandy-yellow hair, high cheekbones, and small, keen blue eyes. The unhappy youth was blushing furiously; his face was about as red as the 'Manual of Conversation' he had hastily shut and placed on the table; and he was now reaching over to the bed to pick up his coat, for he had been marching to and fro in his shirt-sleeves, on this warm summer night.

"Mr. McTaggart, I think?" the councillor said, pleasantly.

"Ay, that's my name," was the shy answer.

"Mine is McFadyen—I dare say ye know who I am," Peter continued, as he took a chair, and even made bold to possess himself of the small red volume lying on the table. "I imagine I heard ye at the French—it's a fine language—a great leeterary accomplishment——"

"That is hardly what I'm thinking of," the young man said. "It was rather for business purposes——"

"Ah, for business purposes? But surely

there's no so many French folk coming through Duntroone way!" rejoined the visitor.

"Oh, no. But—but I was thinking I might get a better chance abroad than staying here—in some new settlement—maybe in South Africa, or East Africa, or the like; and if I could master a little French and German, perhaps a trifle of Portuguese too, it might help me to get on——"

"Admirable—admirable!" cried the councillor, with lofty approval. "That's what I like to hear. That's the true spirit. 'From scenes like these auld Scotia's grandeur springs'—the humble lodging, the energetic young Scotchman laying his plans, with an eye to the Colonies, or further even than that. And what would our Colonies be, but for the pushing young Scotchman, who is up at the front everywhere? Ay, and in the race for Africa, that they talk about, grant a Scotchman his own mother-wit, and give him besides such implements as these—these languages—and where's his equal, where's his rival?" The councillor calmed down a little from this dithyrambic outburst, and began to turn over the pages of the

Manual. "And teaching yourself too?" he resumed, encouragingly. "That's well—that's well. But do ye not experience a little difficulty with the pronunciation?"

"I have a Pronouncing Dictionary," the young man made answer—perhaps, with all his bashfulness, beginning to think that Mr. McFadyen the coal-merchant might as well state the object of his visit.

"Not so satisfactory," said Peter, with a critical air. "There's nothing like hearing the folk themselves speak for giving ye the turn of a language. Nothing like travel. Have ye ever been across the water to France?"

"I have never been as far south as London," said the young haberdasher.

"Dod bless me!" exclaimed the councillor. And then he added drily: "But I wouldna have ye begin there. If ye would understand what the folk in the street are saying, ye must try something easier than London. Ostend, now, or Calais, or Paris itself—though in Paris they are rather given to that nipping and pinching of their speech, and the hurry they're in is just fearful. But it would be practice for ye; it would be practice; and I'm sure ye'd like to see the

way they deck out the splendid windows o' their magazines, as they call them?"

"That I would," returned the young man, quickly, with his eyes lighting up. Then he added: "But it's not to be thought of, as far as I am concerned: it's far away beyond me."

All this while the town-councillor had been idly turning over leaf after leaf, and glancing at this or that phrase; but now he slowly shut the book, and placed it on the table, and shoved it away from him.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. McTaggart," said he; "I should have told you ere now my chief purpose in calling upon ye. As I understand it, you are one of the principal witnesses, if not the principal witness, in the trial that's to take place to-morrow."

The draper's young man looked uncomfortable—but did not reply.

"No that I'm seeking to interfere wi' the ends of justice," McFadyen continued. "God forbid. I would rather promote them. But you are a young man—perhaps not deeply read in human nature—perhaps not accustomed to seeing a young woman in distress—or to comprehend what she may say or do to save herself. Do ye understand me? It's a

terrible thing to give evidence that may ruin a fellow-creature, and bring disgrace on her family. Are ye so sure of your own observation—of your accuracy of sight and hearing? I have learned what story it is you have to tell; most of us have an inkling; and I suppose to-morrow, when the Sheriff has bade ye take the oath, you are prepared to abide by what you think did really happen——”

“I can but tell the truth!” the young man blurted out—perhaps with some vague sensation of alarm.

“I admire ye for that,” Peter continued, calmly. “But have ye considered now? If ye were to bear false witness—however innocently, however unintentionally—I’m sure it would haunt ye to your dying day: what then would be your satisfaction in striving and holding your own among all the fellows that call themselves the pioneers of civilisation? Whereas—and this is what I want particularly to impress on ye, Mr. McTaggart—and I’m not interfering—I would not interfere—what I want to fix in your mind is that it is so easy not to say things when you’re called as a witness. It’s so easy to be safe, for your own peace of mind, for the satisfaction of your own conscience, in after hours

and days. That poor creature of a lass, how could she know what she was doing or saying when she was startled by such a charge being brought against her? You have the impression—an honest impression—yes, yes, doubtless—you have the impression that she offered to pay for the blouse: but are ye sure? are ye going to hamper your conscience with a possibility? And as for the other things you think she said—why, surely in such a moment of desperate flurry and fright, it is all a matter of construction; and your friendly construction—your friendly word—or, better still, what ye might refuse to say—would just be life or death to her, and the saving or the disgrace of her family and friends.”

The young man was staring; and well he might stare. For now, without a further word, Mr. McFadyen took forth from his pocket-book a brand-new Bank of Scotland note for £5, and placed it on the table before him. And then he took out another, and spread that besides its fellow. And then he went to the window, and stood there for a moment or two, looking through the dim panes.

“Mr. McFadyen,” said the poor lad, in an

agitated voice, "what do ye mean? I'm bound to tell the truth—I'll have to take the oath to speak the truth——"

Peter turned round—with a sharp and swift glance. The two bank-notes still lay on the table. He advanced a step, took them up, and restored them to his pocket-book.

"Yes," said he, with a bland magnanimity. "That is undoubtedly so. But I would just remind ye—for ye are a young man yet—that it is hard to tell what the truth may have been in a moment of excitement; and, as I say, a friendly witness can omit this or that, and salve his own conscience as well. Do ye think I am offering a bribe? Na, na, I'm acquainted with the law! But—but I was thinking, after I heard ye busy wi' your French conversation, that a young man like you would profit just beyond measure by a week or two's travelling abroad—your next holidays, I mean; and I would like to help you. Ay," concluded the wily councillor, as he rose to his feet, "and I would add this: that whatever ye happened to see lying on the table remains in my pocket-book, for the present; but—but without prejudice, as the lawyers say—it might come out and lie on the table again. Do ye understand me?

There's no bribery attempted or thought of—God forbid; but a friendly witness is a friendly witness; and a friendly witness is one that keeps a happy conscience thereafter in his own body. Do ye understand me?—and I'll just leave ye to think over what I've said."

And therewith the unscrupulous McFadyen, quite pleased with himself and his astuteness and diplomacy, got him out of the silent and empty house; and presently was down again on the busier esplanade—where the moving groups of people were almost ebony-black against the russet and golden after-glow that filled both sea and sky.

CHAPTER XII.

ARRAIGNED.

“THE Court!” called out the Crier; a sudden hush fell over the scattered groups of folk in the red pine pews; from the opened door the Sheriff, in wig and gown, advanced to his place on the bench; the one or two lawyers at the central table rose and bowed, and the salutation was returned; then the business of the day began. It was all so commonplace, familiar, routine-like. Those people—the spectators—had been idly talking to each other about their ordinary affairs; or glancing out of the tall window towards the blue mountains of Mull; or with a listless curiosity scanning some new-comer. They seemed little to comprehend what issues were involved—what all this meant to the solitary figure in the dock, alone with her

own dreadful fears, perhaps even with her despair.

But there was at least one person present who was nervously and excitedly alive to all that was going on ; and that was the little widow, who was seated by her daughter's side, with her hand firmly gripping Jessie's arm. She said nothing while the Sheriff-clerk, in the well of the court, was reading aloud the charge against the accused ; she only ejaculated, to herself, " Poor lass ! " when the Judge formally asked Barbara if she adhered to her previously-tendered plea of " Not Guilty " ; but when the Clerk proceeded to impanel the jury, her agitation could hardly be kept within control.

" See, see ! " she said, in a hurried undertone, to Jess. " There's Johnnie Wilson—Johnnie !—that I mind coming to Duntroone a long-legged lad with scarce a pair of shoes to his feet. Ay, and many's the good turn your father was doing him ; do you think Johnnie Wilson would be wishing to harm us now ? And McKendrick, Jess—d'ye see McKendrick the boatbuilder yonder—ah, that's a good man—just a perfect man—an elder in Queen Street Free Kirk ; and it's no possible he would lift a finger against an

orphan! It's just no possible! And did you think Barbara made it quite clear to them that she was pleading 'Not Guilty?'—I could hardly hear her myself—and they're in such a hurry from one thing to another that a body is just driven daft-like. See, Jess, there's McLaughlin the bookseller!—a wise, kindly lad—as kindly a lad as ever lived!—if I had known he was to be on the jury, I would have slippit round one of these past evenings to see him and his mother. And do ye not think ye could make a bit signal to him, and let him see we are here, and looking to him for help? There could be no harm in that, lass—no harm at all——”

“Sh! mother!” said Jess, under her breath.

For now the Procurator Fiscal, rising from his place at the table, intimated to the Judge that he would proceed to lead evidence; and the first witness summoned by the Crier was Alexander McLennan. Mr. McLennan the draper—a small, pale, black-a-vised, shy-looking man—stepped along and entered the witness-box. The little widow was regarding him with eyes that burned.

“Ah, the ape!—ah, the serpent!” she muttered, through her clenched teeth—and

she was all trembling with passion. "To bring such a story against one of my girls! If my poor man was alive—if my man was alive to look after us—McLennan would not be standing there with his brazen face——"

And yet McLennan the draper—when the oath had been administered to him by the Sheriff, and when the Fiscal, following the witness's precognition which he held in his hand, set about eliciting his story—McLennan did not appear to be actuated by any animosity. The tale he had to tell was simple enough. In answer to the Fiscal's questions, he said he had been led to suspect the accused because of the disappearance of certain articles after she had been visiting his shop; and he had resolved to watch, and had ordered his assistants to do the like. On the day in question, the accused entering the shop, he had directed the silk tartan blouse now produced—produced and lying on the table for the jury to see—to be placed on the counter. She had on one or two previous visits examined the blouse, inquired the price, and so forth. On this last occasion, she had made some small and unimportant purchases, and was about to leave the shop again, when witness, who

had been standing behind a rack used for the hanging and displaying of shawls, stepped forward and intercepted her. He saw that the blouse was gone ; he assumed that she had taken it ; and asked her if she had received a bill for it. The prisoner was greatly disconcerted ; said she had not taken the blouse ; at the same moment it appeared to fall from underneath her half-open jacket. She then made conflicting statements ; first, that she meant to pay for it on her return ; again, that it had fallen on the floor by accident ; again, that she had been commissioned to buy it for her cousin, and would bring the money presently ; at last she said she would give them the price of the blouse twice over if they would let her go. Then he sent for a policeman.

“ Ay, ay,” said the widow, breathing hard, “ but it is not a policeman you would want, if God was to strike you dead for your lies ! ”

The Fiscal sate down, and the long, thin, sandy-haired Mr. Grant got up, leisurely twisting his watch-chain between finger and thumb. Addressing the witness, he said he wished to put a few questions. Had he, McLennan, on any previous occasion observed the prisoner abstract any article from his

shop? No? Then how came he to fix his suspicions on her out of all his customers? Did he do so just at random? Being annoyed over these losses, was he determined to secure a scapegoat, no matter whom? And being resolved to convict somebody, he was not above laying a snare? And having prepared his trap, he was fully anticipating that his designed victim would fall into it? He was behind a screen of shawls, and perhaps could not see very well; but, expecting a certain thing to happen, he did not need the evidence of his eyes: he jumped to the conclusion that it had happened?

“Ah, do ye hear?—do ye hear, Allan?” exclaimed the impulsive and warm-hearted little widow, as she leaned over and touched the schoolmaster on the arm—the schoolmaster, whose absorbed and rapt attention seemed to be following every turn and twist of the desultory narrative.

The cross-examination continued. Was he, McLennan, ready to swear that he actually saw the blouse in the possession of the accused? No? It only appeared to fall from her when he stepped forward? At all events, it would be safe to say that, when he emerged from his hiding-place and

advanced to the accused, the first he saw of the blouse was either that it was falling, or had fallen, to the floor in front of him? But there were different ways and means by which it might have come there? He was doubtless familiar with the fact that women's dress in the present day was frequently adorned with prehensile tags and gewgaws well calculated to sweep off any loose article lying about? As to the so-called confession of the prisoner, was he prepared to swear that these were the exact and literal words she had used? Was his memory so prodigiously accurate? He had not jotted down any memorandum of these contradictory sentences? Was he himself somewhat perturbed by this unusual incident? As these quiet, insidious, encouraging little questions came at him one after the other, the shy-looking black-a-vised draper became more and more visibly discomposed—and Mrs. Maclean more and more triumphant. It is true, the re-examination by the Fiscal in a measure restored Mr. McLennan's equanimity; and he stepped out from the box and passed along to the witnesses' room happily unconscious of the vengeful and bitter regard with which the widow followed him.

The next witness—young McTaggart the shopman—was clearly from the very outset in a condition of abject fright. He entered the box apprehensively; his uplifted right hand, when the Sheriff administered the oath, was tremulous; his replies to the questions of the Fiscal were mumbled and almost inaudible. And it is to be presumed that no one in all the Court-house now listened more keenly than Peter MacFadyen; here was his man; and little did the lawyers biting the end of their quills know of the secret influences that had been brought to bear to outwit them. At first, indeed, the shock-headed youth's narrative of what had happened at the counter was mainly a corroboration of his employer's statements.

“Ay, ay—yes, yes,” muttered the widow, in spite of all her daughter's persuasive repression, “a fine story, my young lad!—and if your master is a liar, why should not you be too? But wait till Grant gets at ye! Ay, it's some combing of your besom-hair that's wanted for you, my fine fellow—and Grant will give it ye directly!”

But when Mr. Grant came to cross-examine the unhappy young man, he found him an almost too easy prey. The bewildered youth

was ready to admit anything. His most passionate hope of being able to practise French conversation in the streets and omnibuses of Paris could not have been more effectual than his pathetic desire to propitiate this ruthless questioner. He was not playing into the hands of the defence through any base longing for McFadyen's £10; he was merely frightened out of his wits on finding himself in a public pillory; and willing to assent to every one of the lawyer's suggestions, so that he might the sooner escape. Accordingly, he acknowledged that it was with some reluctance he had consented to set a trap by means of which this young woman might be tempted into the commission of a crime. He agreed that it was impossible he could have kept the snare under continuous supervision; for he was fetching down things from the shelves for the accused to examine; again and again he must have turned his back. Moreover, he owned that he had not placed any weight or other article on the blouse, after laying it on the counter: there was nothing to hinder its being swept off by some slight accident. Again, he was on the inside of the counter: how, then, could he see in what manner the blouse came

to reach the floor, on the outside? As to the conflicting statements alleged to have been made by the prisoner, was he prepared to swear to precise words and expressions used in a moment of extreme agitation? But at this point the shock-headed youth began to develop a confusion and a gasping acquiescence that were not only extremely welcome to the lawyer, but that also convinced Mr. McFadyen he would sooner or later, and in some cryptic fashion, have to pay over £10. The young man, his complexion pale, his forehead clammy, his eyes dilated and nervous—appeared to be in some kind of hypnotic trance; he remembered, or did not remember, just as this long, thin, sandy-haired agent thought fit to suggest; he clung desperately to the formula ‘the best of his belief.’ Nor did re-examination restore him to himself; white-faced, protuberant-eyed, he seemed to reel away from the box, as it were; and doubtless began to breathe again only when he found that the gaze of the crowd was no longer upon him.

And all this while Jess Maclean, when she dared, had been stealing an occasional and covert glance at the schoolmaster, fearing that he had already divined the truth. Well

she knew that the fencing of lawyers and the heckling of witnesses would have but little concern for him; the progress of the trial would be for him no mere game of skill, that one could watch and study, with a calculation of the chances of acquittal; the sole and terrible question for him was whether the poor wretch alone there in the dock had really done this thing, bringing upon herself all its tragic and illimitable consequences. And yet Jess, accustomed as she was to read his features, was now completely baffled. His face was immobile and impassive—sombre a little, perhaps—and unmistakably oblivious of the people around. Even the proceedings in court, as they went on, seemed to claim from him but a forced and mechanical sort of attention. There were further witnesses to be examined and re-examined; articles found in the house of the accused, and alleged to have been stolen—the red sun-shade conspicuous amongst them—were produced and identified; there was evidence of previous good character; and the like. But throughout all this Allan Henderson remained distraught and absent-minded. Was he already convinced? Once or twice his eyes rested on the solitary figure in the dock; but little

was to be seen of the hapless Barbara ; she was facing the Sheriff—her head downcast, her figure drawn together as though she were cowering and hiding herself.

Then the Fiscal got up and addressed the Court for the prosecution—insisting that this was a particularly bad case : not a sudden yielding to temptation, but part of a planned and systematic purloining, for which no excuse or palliation had been offered. Next came Grant the solicitor with his reply for the defence—rather dwelling on the youth of the prisoner, her position as an almost newly-married wife, and the extreme probability that she had been terrified into making damaging admissions when this dreadful charge had been brought against her. Finally the Sheriff summed-up, keeping mainly to the legal aspects of the case. And then fifteen good men and true filed out of the two pine benches, and rather sheepishly—for they were unaccustomed to this prominence and publicity—crossed the hall, and betook themselves to the jury-room.

“ Ah, the bonny lads !—the bonny lads ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Maclean, in an eager and tremulous whisper—indeed, she was shaking like a leaf—“ they will put her right !—they

will quit my lass!—after all the stories and lies!”

Allan Henderson had not turned to say a word to any of the friends or relatives near him; and now, in this period of waiting, his eyes were bent on the floor. Even Jess did not dare to approach him with any little whisper of comfort or hope. The jury were absent for only a few minutes—not over ten.

Then they came back; and their Chancellor remained standing. The Sheriff, in a formal kind of way, asked if they had come to a decision.

“We find the accused guilty of the charge as libelled,” said the Chancellor — self-conscious and red of face.

For just one second the Sheriff glanced towards them: was there to be no recommendation to mercy? There was none. The Fiscal moved the Court to pronounce sentence; the Clerk at the table pulled his papers towards him; the Sheriff, after a few observations uttered in the same dispassionate tones, announced that the sentence of the Court was six months’ imprisonment.

“My lord!—my lord! she’s an orphan lass!” cried out the widow, as she sank forward half-fainting, till Jess caught her in

her arms ; and at this moment the prisoner—her head still averted, her figure apparently lifeless—was led away by the two policemen, disappearing through the door leading to the exercise-yard and the cells.

And now some were for going home ; and others lingered to talk ; but the schoolmaster found himself alone, at the foot of the wide stairs, his face confronting the white daylight. There was a phrase he had often used recurring now to his brain in some wild, bewildering fashion—‘ The poor *Naturkind* ! The poor *Naturkind* that she has always been ! ’ ; and on his features there was no stern reprehension at all ; nay, as he left the building, his eyes were so swimming wet that he could hardly see his way. Jess, with her heart full of yearning pity, nevertheless had not the courage to follow him. She looked after him—as he went aimlessly along by the harbour, in the direction of the Gallows Hill.

“ Mother,” said she, in a low voice, though he was now far out of hearing, “ if—if you can get Allan to stay in our house to-night—I will go with Barbara wherever they are taking her.”

CHAPTER XIII.

DAY AND NIGHT.

BUT that was mad and wild counsel—uttered in a moment of half-reckless despair. For Jess Maclean knew this man ; not for nothing had she watched and studied him—him and all his imperfections, his perversities, his scornful endurance of ills, his impatient contempt of meaner natures ; and she herself had foretold where, in such a crisis as had now arrived, Allan Henderson would be found. ‘There is but the one place for your husband to be,’ she had said to Barbara, ‘and that is by your side.’ And when she learned from the police-officials that the prisoner was to be taken through to Glasgow on this same afternoon, she went along at the appointed hour to the railway-station, knowing well whom she should find waiting there.

He was on the platform, alone, and unnoticed among the scattered crowd of folk bidding good-bye to their friends. And fortunate it was that these people were so busily occupied ; for at this moment Barbara—Barbara, all broken-down in appearance, listless, hopeless, the beautiful eyes tired and worn with excess of weeping, and now only haunted with a sort of cowering and shuddering horror of these groups of strangers—Barbara came along in charge of a constable, the two of them attracting far less attention than might have been expected. The officer opened the door of a third-class compartment ; Barbara entered, and sank into a seat ; while Jess Maclean and Allan instinctively moved up, as if to prevent the approach of any curious person. For a second or two no one spoke ; but all the same Jess made bold to put her hand into the carriage, and with that hand she held Barbara's hand ; the law could not—or, at least, did not—forbid this form of communication. And then Barbara said, with a timid look towards the constable—

“ Jess, if you would—if you would ask this gentleman—maybe he would let you come in beside me—— ”

The gentleman—who was not a gentleman

at all—nor even an inspector—nor yet a sergeant—but just a decent and simple lad from Mull, who did not quite appear to relish these duties that had devolved upon him—the ingenuous-looking constable took no notice of this hint. And meanwhile Jess had to interpose with an explanation.

“I cannot go to Glasgow with you, Barbara,” said she. “I was ready and willing—indeed, yes; but my mother is taken very ill; and I dare not leave her for so long. But Allan is going with you, Barbara. Who else? Who else would you be wishing to have with you?—who else could protect you as well?—”

A strange look of dread or doom seemed to settle on the girl's face; she did not venture a single half-frightened glance towards her husband; when she heard that Jess was not going with her, she appeared to care for nothing after that; a kind of blankness of despair took possession of her. And Jess could not part with her in this mood.

“Barbara,” said she, with a fine affectation of confidence and good-humour, though her lips were inclined to be tremulous despite all she could do, “you must be remembering

this—that when you come back to us, you will be just the same as the rest of us. The law has decided against you ; and it may be right, or it may be wrong ; but anyway, when you have done what they require of you, then you are free, you are quits ; you are just like every one else. And you will let me know how often I can write to you ; and you will write to us as often as you can. And you will tell us when we are to come for you—to bring you back—— ”

Barbara shook her head—without a word.

“ Take your seats, please,” called the guard ; and as he came up, Allan Henderson stepped forward, and without asking permission of anyone, entered the carriage, passed to the further end, and sate down by the window. Then the door was shut ; the whistles sounded ; and the train began to creep out of the station. Jess walked a few farewell yards along the platform ; it was she who was crying and sobbing now—in spite of herself ; Barbara seemed lost in a misery and gloom that had arrived almost at indifference. Finally, Jess, having watched the carriage-window till the very last moment, turned and took her way slowly home ; while the train thundered on towards the south.

And now

‘Sad and silent was the night
That was atween thir twae’;

for although no compact had been entered into by which Allan had gained admission into this compartment, there was some tacit kind of feeling that in the presence of the constable these two must needs regard each other as strangers. Perhaps Barbara was so far glad and relieved; perhaps she had some secret dread of indignation and reproach; though there was little of either in Allan Henderson’s heart. Nay, he was full of sympathy and commiseration for ‘the poor *Naturkind*’ and her downcast condition; it may be that he understood her tragic case far more clearly than she did herself; more clearly than she did, without doubt, he perceived the web of circumstance by which she had been surrounded and brought to ruin. Resentment—reprobation—as if he had been the wronged person—was indeed far away from his mind. He remained silent, it is true; but he was tremblingly sensitive to each slight motion of her costume, to each laboured and weary sigh, to each shifting from one shoulder to the other, as if she were ill and

ill at ease. He pitied her even for her dress ; for Barbara had always liked something of ornament and show ; but now it was only too evident that in the abandonment of her grief and terror she had had no thought for any such trivialities. Perhaps Jess might have looked after her, had there been the opportunity. The splendid folds of her raven-black hair had been put back in some rude kind of fashion ; but now there were none of the coquettish tangles and twirls she had been fond of displaying about her ears. She wore no gloves, nor any dainty white cuffs about her wrists, nor any slip of silk tartan ribbon round her throat—this poor *Naturkind*, who had been so severely buffeted and shipwrecked by the wild storms of human chance.

As the evening wore on, and they were up among the lonely mountains beyond Crainlarich, a somewhat chill wind blew in and through the compartment ; and Barbara was seated with her face to the engine. Allan rose, stepped across, and pulled up the window, so as to afford her shelter.

“Thank you,” she said, in a low voice—without raising her eyes.

Again, when they got down to Stirling

station, he sought out the refreshment-room, had a couple of paper bags filled with sweet biscuits and the like, and when he returned he mutely tendered them to her. She took them, with another word of thanks ; though not even now did she dare to raise her eyes to his. And thus they resumed their journey to Glasgow, and to the great and sombre building that stands by the river.

But in the meantime Barbara had not failed to notice that when the constable happened to recognise an acquaintance at any of the stations along the line, the few words that passed between them were usually in Gaelic ; and accordingly, when she at length ventured to address a hesitating question or two to him, on their drawing near to Glasgow, it was in that tongue she spoke, so as perhaps to win a little favour and friendliness. And it was still in Gaelic that she said—in a diffident undertone that Allan could not well overhear—

“ My husband has come a long way. Will you be giving me a moment that I can say good-bye to him ? ”

“ Do you mean at the station ? ” responded the constable.

“ It is wherever you please, sir,” said

Barbara, humbly. "I am not wishing for anything that is not permitted—but—but my husband, he has come a long way."

"Oh, very well," said the good-natured young officer. "When we get to the station, I will try to leave you by yourselves for a minute, just where you are, but no more than a minute, for there will be a cab to take you on to the Jail."

And he was as good as his word. When the train had passed the ticket-platform, had slowed in to the terminus, and finally come to a standstill, the constable opened the door, stepped out, and remained there with his back to the carriage. At the same moment Allan rose to his feet; and Barbara rose also; but she did not look up to see the extraordinary compassion that dwelt in his eyes; she rather stood before him as a culprit and penitent, ready to receive whatever scorn and chastisement of words he chose to heap upon her. And yet—no matter what might be his indignation and contumely—she had so many things she longed to say, and all of them struggling for utterance! Her chest heaved; she seemed to breathe with difficulty; her hands, down by her side, were firmly clenched. She was waiting. Why did he not strike?

“Poor lass! Poor lass!” said he; and the mere tone of his voice, so unexpected, so unmistakable in its true ring of solicitude and tenderness, caused her whole frame to tremble. I suppose I can go no further with you now——”

“Allan, Allan,” she burst out in a sort of wild way, “I am not hoping that you will ever forgive me for what I have done! Oh, no!—no, no!—I do not expect it—I have brought nothing but harm to you—I have been a bad wife to you—I have brought nothing but harm and shame. But now—now you will go away back to your home; and you will soon forget me; and I will never seek to see Duntroone any more—never, never—I have done enough harm—I will never see you or any of them any more—it is all that I can do now——”

“Barbara!” said he, gently and gravely. “You are talking foolishness. Do you remember the last words that Jessie spoke to you on the platform?—she said that when you came back to us you would be just as one of ourselves—quit and free of everything that had gone by—and all of us only anxious that it should be forgotten——”

“Ah, no, no!” she broke in upon him,

quite incoherently. "That is all away. I will never trouble you any more—I have done too much harm. And there's other things I would say—but—but only a moment now; and it's my thanks to you for your goodness to me, and that you have not cursed at me, as many a one would have done. Indeed, indeed you have been kind to me; and I was not deserving it; there was many things happening that you did not know about; and there was never any hard word from you. And now you will go away to your home—and Jessie will look after the house for you—she was always a better friend to you than I was——"

The constable turned and looked into the compartment: the cab was waiting at the platform.

"My poor lass," said the schoolmaster, trying to smooth back her disordered hair into some semblance of its former neatness, "you will soon begin to think of the days of your coming back to us——"

"Ah, never, never," she cried, in panting accents; "it is the one thing I can do, never to trouble you any more—neither you nor any of them—I have brought too much harm and shame——"

The young constable, irresolute, anxious, a little shamefaced, opened the door wide.

“Will you be coming now, mem?” said he.

By this time most of the travellers had left the platform; when those two crossed to the vehicle that was in attendance, there was hardly any one about to witness their last and mute farewell. And then Barbara was driven away; and the schoolmaster, not knowing what his next step should be, found himself a solitary stranger in this great and friendless town.

Yet not quite friendless either. More than once, during all the recent whirl of experiences and emotions, a wandering thought or two had involuntarily fled away towards the sick-chamber of Alec MacNeil; and now, in this strange succeeding calm and isolation, it was but natural he should wish to look once again on the face of his old comrade. Not that he proposed to carry the tale of his own wounds and sorrows to the invalid's room; these were for his private hours of reverie and renunciation; but there would be some kind of solace in merely sitting by the side of his friend; it was moreover a duty he owed—if any companionship of his could lighten a weary half-hour. And so, in a dull and

mechanical fashion, he betook himself away through the wet and gas-lit streets; and eventually reached the building in Garscube Road at the top of which MacNeil had his poor lodging.

It was now late; and, as he ascended to the highest storey, he passed noiselessly up the staircase, lest the sick man should have already got to sleep. Not a sound was audible anywhere. With the same cautious footsteps he arrived at the landing, which was quite dark; and then he stealthily approached the door, and listened. No—not a sound. Nevertheless, he lingered; for MacNeil might be reading; and at any minute he might put down the book, and call to the attendant grandmother. Nay, the longer Allan Henderson tarried here in the darkness, the more did he seem to crave for a friendly word and glance, if only as a reminiscence of the far-bygone, half-happy student-times. He would bring with him no useless tidings of his own broken and shattered life. Rather his talk would be—if his old companion were still awake, and inclined to hear—his talk would be of cheerful things—of Cathkin Braes, and May mornings, of eager and joyous rambles by Bothwell

Banks, and Cadzow, and Stonebyres. They would recall the early woods—the resonant ‘*Gaudeamus*’ of the tramping chorus—the breakfast in the remote little wayside public-house. These were the proper pictures for any poor tired soul to fall asleep with, so that a scent of hawthorn-bushes and a murmur of distant waterfalls should come stealing through the vagrant dreams of the night.

Of a sudden he was startled by a low moaning; hushed and faint it was; and yet the silence around was so intense that he could not be mistaken. It was the old grandmother’s voice; it was a kind of plaintive wail she uttered; ‘och-hon!—och-hon!—och-hon!’ repeated in despairing tones; and then came silence again. He knew not what was happening, or what had happened, within; but he dared not go away. He tapped lightly with the back of his hand. There was no answer. He rapped a second time, and waited. Presently the door was opened, and the old grandmother peered out into the gloom.

“Ah, yes,” she said, with a heavy sigh, when she had discovered who her visitor was, “you were the last that he was speaking

of, the poor lad!—and the last of his friends that came to see him.” She retreated a little space, as if inviting him to enter. “There is but a sorrowful welcome in the house now; but maybe you would like to look on all that is left of my poor boy. Yes, he was speaking of you to the end—and there are some books for you—and a fishing-rod—to the very end he was speaking of you——”

The schoolmaster removed his cap, and passed in.

“When did it happen?” he said—in a needless whisper.

“This morning,” she made answer, “just as the day was coming in at the window.”

Then she led him to the small, dimly-lit room where the dead man lay, peaceful enough now after the long struggle with his insidious and merciless enemy.

“And is there no one in the house with you?” he asked of her, in a little while.

“None. But the neighbours have been very kind.”

“Grandmother,” said he, “I will stay a while with you, if you will let me; I will stay with you, until you tell me to go. I am rather lonely myself to-night. And I would like to hear what he was thinking of,

what he was talking of, when it came near to the last."

So she softly shut the door behind them, and preceded him into the kitchen, where the turned-up gas was burning a little more cheerfully. She took her chair near the fireplace; she put on her spectacles again; and made as though she would have resumed her sewing, but that the interest of the pathetic monologue she now entered upon, interrupted as it was by many a covert fit of crying, caused her to desist. For these were not merely deathbed reminiscences that led her garrulity to wander on through the dead hours of the night. This grandson of hers had been during his too brief life her best-beloved; and she had treasured up a minute recollection of all the wonderful things that had happened to him—his childish exploits—his leaving Colonsay—his successes at school and college—the kindness of the manufacturer in whose warehouse he had secured a situation as book-keeper. It was with pride as well as affection that she rambled on; this was a marvellous career, she seemed to say, that had been so pitilessly cut short; mournful as the disconnected narrative was, it had its brighter glimpses; and perhaps for an

occasional minute or two Allan forgot to think of the dark and ominous building away down at the other end of the city, near to the dim river. Nay, it was something to have the companionship of this poor old creature, even here in the silent house of death. And she, too, appeared to be grateful to him for remaining with her—as she talked on, in this hushed fashion, broken by many sobs and piteous ejaculations.

At last he rose to go, after having made patient inquiries as to her circumstances, her plans, and her remaining relatives. When he got outside, he found that the world had undergone transfiguration; the new dawn was abroad, pale over the moving canopy of smoke in the east; the grey houses near him were waking out of their dream. At such an hour he did not care to go in search of a lodging; moreover, the rain of the night had ceased; soon the morning would be shining fair and wide and clear. And so—perhaps with some vague and restless desire to escape from the black shadows that appeared to be encompassing him—he struck away out into the country: everywhere the white daylight was now beginning to tell.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAULINE.

HE was returning, heart-sick and tired and hopeless, from his long and fortuitous ramble, and he was coming in by way of the Botanic Gardens, when he chanced to perceive, leaving a house on the other side of the thoroughfare, a well-known and easily-recognised figure. It was Professor Menzies. And he would fain have slunk by unnoticed ; he was in no humour for talking to anyone ; still less did he wish to be cross-examined about what had recently happened to him or his. But the next minute he heard himself called by name ; he became aware of overtaking strides ; and presently, the Professor—a big, bulky, fresh-complexioned, eupeptic-looking man—had him by the shoulder.

“ What—what’s this ? ” he exclaimed, in a hale and hearty voice. “ Not running

away, are you? Why, it was only yesterday I was thinking of you, and wondering how you were getting on in Duntroone. And what's brought you to Glasgow? I'm going as far as Garnet Hill—I'll walk with you."

And so Allan—not unmindful of many kindnesses and confidences—was constrained to tell his story, down even to the sombre experiences of the day before.

"A terrible bad business," said the Professor, after a moment or two. "Terrible—terrible. And what are your plans now? Are you going back to Duntroone?"

"As soon as I get poor MacNeil buried."

"Your return home will not be a very cheerful thing," was the next vague suggestion.

"I shall have plenty to do," Allan responded, "when the school opens; and there will be my own classes in the evening."

The two walked on for some little time in silence.

"How I came to be thinking of you yesterday was this," the Professor said, at length. "I was thinking you knew little of the mischief you had done by refusing the offer of the Cairds—you remember?"

"Remember? Yes, indeed! And many's

the time I've thought that I never half expressed my thanks to you."

"You appeared unwilling to give up your pupils. But I could have provided you with a substitute—I imagine so; and you may be pretty certain that the Cairds of Carsehill would not have let you suffer in pocket through the transaction. Well, what happens through your refusal? The lad, whimsical as he may be, was half-inclined to go; he had heard something about you; and after all, he is amenable enough—though those tearing, hunting, horse-racing uncles of his seem to look on him as a sort of changeling. You refuse—and what is the result? He returns to his idling, his verse-making, his newspaper-scribbling; spends most of his time at the Nike-apteros Club—among artists, journalists, and the like; and at last—this is the climax—falls into love with an actress some member of a strolling company—and declares his intention of marrying her. What do you think of that now?"

"If he was of the mind and temperament to fall in love with an actress," rejoined the schoolmaster, "he would have done that as readily in any town of Austria or Italy as in any city or town of Scotland."

“ Well, no—not necessarily. For there is a certain barrier in language. And he knows a good deal more of Greek and Latin than he does of German or Italian.”

“ There is another language,” Allan said.

“ Yes. There may be, when two combustible souls happen to catch fire at once. But that doesn’t occur often, does it? However, I’ve shown you how we stand at present; and what are the tearing, swearing, blustering iron-masters of Carsehill to make of it? He is so sweetly reasonable through it all! They talk of the disgrace of the family; while he is polishing pretty verses about her brown ringlets.”

“ Is she a respectable girl?”

“ Apparently she is. At least they can’t find out anything to the contrary; and if they did, or fancied they did, no doubt he would only smile at them in disdain. For, as I say, the scamp is not unreasonable, even in the midst of his folly. He is open to argument. In fact, there has been some revival of that same project that he should go abroad for a considerable time—with the chance of all this blowing over—with several chances indeed; and I am told he is not afraid to put the young lady’s constancy, and

his own, to the test. If he were challenged, he would probably consent; but the old difficulty remains—how to secure a proper companion for him. He is capricious in his fancies. The ordinary young men of his own age, and all their pursuits, he regards with detestation. He might have done well at college, for the rascal is clever; but he is without sufficient aim—too erratic for any steady work—would rather put a handful of rhymes in his pocket, walk away out into the country, sit down by the wayside, and tinker at them. Hardly the kind of fellow to attack a translation of the *Nibelungenlied*, eh?—by the bye, I should have asked how you were getting on.”

“I have been thinking of other things of late,” said the schoolmaster.

The big, stalwart, friendly Professor suddenly halted—as if the better to arrest attention.

“Look here, Henderson,” said he. “The Cairds have come to me several times about this affair—they know I can talk to the youth with some chance of being listened to, whereas they belong to a different world altogether. Now, suppose this former scheme were to be revived. I don’t at all like the

idea of your going away back home to your ordinary life, in the present circumstances. You want a complete change, of scene and occupation; you want to forget a little—in order to recover your mental tone. Very well. Assuming that the uncles and young Caird could come to some agreement, would you be willing to go with him on his period of probation—that is, if you and he found that you got on well together? It would mean the giving up of your place in the school; and also getting a substitute to take your classes; but the Carsehill squires would be liberal in such a case; and the young fellow, he is really good-natured, he would see it was made worth your while. A couple of years' absence from England——”

“I should have to be back in this town six months from now,” said Allan, simply.

The Professor coloured slightly: he understood.

“But even six months,” said he, as they resumed their walk, “is a long time; and many things happen in it; six months might find Caird junior restored to his sane and sober senses; and in any case six months' absence from England would be a wholesome thing for you. Now I don't want you to

make any definite promise; but come and see this young fellow—see what you think of him. I may be too busy to hunt him up to-day; but in that case I will write to him; and to-morrow you and I could call on him in the afternoon. Is it a bargain? I might run across some of his people meanwhile—who knows? Turn it over in your mind now—and don't be in a hurry; and if you think well of the scheme, send me a note saying where I shall find you to-morrow afternoon at four."

Allan did not refuse—could not think of refusing: clearly enough he recognised all the kindness, the goodwill, and thoughtfulness that underlay this apparently rough-and-ready proposal. And accordingly, on the next afternoon, Professor Menzies and his protégé found themselves being shown into a suite of rooms on the first floor of a house in Sauchiehall Street. They were smartly-furnished rooms; but the decoration was not as the decoration of many young men's apartments. There were no fencing-foils, masks, or dumb-bells, with hunting and yachting trophies, and coloured lithographs representing famous exploits on Epsom Downs; a gentler tone prevailed; around

the walls, and in one or two small cabinets, and on the mantel-shelves, were displayed Hispano-Moresque dishes, Tanagra figures, squares of Italian sixteenth-century embroidery framed and glazed, bronze statuettes, a number of landscapes chiefly of the Scotch school, and a series of prints from the *Liber Studiorum*. The owner of these various possessions now entered—a young lad of nineteen or twenty, rather under middle height, and distinctly lame in one leg; the face and head intelligent and interesting, the complexion pale, the mouth finely-formed, the eyes large, clear, and amiable. His manners, too, were winning; he bade his visitors welcome with an offhand simplicity; and again and again he regarded Allan with a scrutinising glance that seemed frankly to say ‘So, it is you they want me to go travelling with, for six months, or a year, or two years?’ On the other hand the schoolmaster—as he subsequently wrote to Jess—formed from the very first a liking for this lame lad. He was a trifle shy, perhaps, and yet somehow defiant in his shyness. He appeared to treat his horse-racing uncles with more than a suspicion of gentle ridicule. He even ventured upon a little banter with regard

to the Professor, which was taken in good part. And he was especially courteous and civil to his stranger-guest; and said some very pretty things about the West Highlands and the folk living there.

But it had been the design of Professor Menzies to leave these two to themselves; and so, pleading an engagement, he left; while young Caird, having persuaded Allan to remain, proceeded to talk about himself, and his circumstances, and this projected trip, with the most engaging, and useful, candour. He was not averse from going, he said, if it would pacify his relatives; though their ideas, he added with a smile, as to what would accrue from this long absence, were purely chimerical. And if, on his side, Mr. Henderson could be induced to join, what countries in Europe would he chiefly wish to visit?

At this Allan's eyes flashed up in eager flame.

"There is the one place—the one place in all the world—Athens!"

And then he shrank back upon himself, as it were, half in shame.

"I beg your pardon," he said, quite humbly. "I was bewildered for a moment. The mere

mention of Athens shows me that it is not for me to go with you on such a journey as you are thinking of. No, no. You must have somebody with you far less ignorant than I am. What could I tell you at Athens, at Nauplia, at Acro-Corinth? You must have somebody skilled and learned. They are the most interesting places in the world; and what could a country schoolmaster tell you?"

The young lad had been looking at him—not with disfavour.

"I don't want anybody to tell me anything," said he. "I should like to see the places, no doubt; but I am not anxious to be lectured. Not in the least. If I have to do penance—or go on probation—if that is their insane idea—it has got to be made easy. The peas must be boiled. Do you know any modern Greek?"

"Not to speak it, anyway."

"Well, we can be cheated in some other language," continued the young man, placidly. "I want some Rhodian plates; and I am told there are a few to be picked up in Athens now and again." He had limped over to the mantel-shelves, apparently to have another loving look at the row of splendid red-lustre dishes; but presently he

returned, with a little brown paper-covered book—an acting-edition—in his hand. “By the way,” he said, “have you ever seen ‘The Lady of Lyons’?”

“No; but I have read the play.”

“And what did you think of it?”

“Trash, it seemed to me,” was the straight answer.

Young Caird winced a little.

“Yes—perhaps—from the point of view of literature. But the language of the stage must necessarily be conventional; it is a condensation; and it has to be made effective. And it doesn’t much matter, does it, how artificial the dialogue may be, so long as you are impressed by the characters——”

“And find them admirable, or lovable, or even believable and interesting. But look at that fellow,” said the schoolmaster, regarding the harmless little brown book with unnecessary scorn; “look at that cowardly cur who howls and shrieks for revenge simply because a young woman has rejected his impertinent advances. Isn’t that the right of every young woman, whether she is rich or poor? But this mouthing fellow, with his turgid blank verse, when she sends him back his rubbish of verses, has all his

outraged vanity set on fire—he will stop her in the open streets—he will publicly insult her—he will descend to any meanness and trickery in order to humiliate her—he will conspire with her enemies—anything—so that his own stupendous egotism and self-love may be solaced and avenged—Bah! there has been many a hero, stuffed with sawdust, stuck up for the world to admire, but never anyone quite so despicable as that!”

Young Caird was still further disconcerted.

“Well—perhaps—perhaps with regard to him; but as for her now—as for Pauline, you know——”

“As for her?” continued the ruthless schoolmaster. “When she discovers how basely he has plotted to deceive and betray her, when she perceives all the lying he has gone through in order to fill his nutshell of a heart with the glory of revenge—revenge on a woman!—how can she stoop to such a hound? What miracle is likely to change his character? His monstrous vanity—his inconceivable meanness—and, worse than everything, his insufferable blank verse, would remain with him to the end of the chapter——”

The younger man tossed the book on to the table.

“Perhaps what you say is right,” he repeated, “from the literary point of view. Perhaps. But then you have not seen the piece acted: you have never seen the living human beings before you. Now I happen to know where it is to be played to-night.” He named a small town—which need not be more definitely particularised here—some seven or eight miles out of Glasgow. “Would you like to see it—if you have no other engagement for this evening? What do you say? We could go down in a cab now to the Nick—the Nike-apteros—and I could send round a message to my livery-stable man to have a carriage got ready for us. Then we have an hour or so at the Club for a bite of something to eat—a cigarette or so in the billiard-room—and we start off. It is by far the pleasantest way of going out to—— at this time of the year; there is no catching of trains; and you can come away when you like. What do you say?”

To Allan it may have seemed a strange kind of proposal. Last night, the house of the dead: to-night, the glare of the theatre. But, after all, this was a bizarre kind of

world; and he was getting used to diverse experiences, and perhaps becoming a little blunted; moreover, he knew well it was no mere literary discussion that was making this young man so anxious he should see the divine Pauline tread the stage. So he assented; a cab was called; and they drove down to the Nike-apteros Club in West Regent Street.

It was an unpretentious little establishment; well appointed; and with a general look of homely cheerfulness. Besides this, owing to the early hour—and to the fact that most of the landscapers were now away in the country—they had the place almost to themselves; the dining-room, in especial, was empty.

“And why Nike-apteros?” Allan asked, as he looked around at the spacious apartment, with its brightly-laid tables and its pictures. “Not much like the Temple of Ægeus, surely?”

“A very good name—a capital name,” rejoined his host, “for a lot of fellows who want to do the very best they can without too much blowing of trumpets.”

Nevertheless, it was not of any achievements, victorious or otherwise, with either

pen or pencil, that they proceeded to converse, here on this pleasant summer evening, as they sate at their sufficiently frugal meal. The talk was mostly of Pauline—of Pauline, and the mysterious magic of stage-presentation; with a little excursus in the direction of Wilhelm Meister, and De Quincey's various judgments and findings; though Pauline managed to reappear after the briefest possible absence. And there was also a good deal of Pauline—and of happy anticipation—as the eager-eyed young host thereafter led the way out to the open barouche that was waiting for them; and as they drove off and through the wide-spreading suburbs. Allan had been implored to cast aside prejudice; instead of prejudice, prepossession was now taking hold of him; he was almost ready to abjure his heresies, and to range himself as a meek and remote adorer of Miss Deschappelles.

It was rather a rude and barn-like building, this Volunteer Hall; but it had been made into a semblance of a theatre; there was an act-drop; and there was a scant orchestra. And hardly had the two newcomers taken their seats when the music came to an end, the curtain was raised, and the first scene was disclosed—with no other

than Pauline herself, 'reclining on a sofa, R.' Well, as shortly appeared, she was not an imposing Pauline; she was rather a diminutive little person; and her finery was sadly tarnished; but none the less her management of her train and her peacock walk across the stage lent her an imaginary height and stateliness; her figure was elegant and graceful; her softly-modulated English accent was attractive; and her delivery of blank verse—when the time came for that—was distinctly admirable. Nay, there was something more. She alone—as the play proceeded—stood out from this grotesque rabble of incompetents. Beauseant and Glavis were dreadful. Damas, with his efforts at Italian pronunciation, had well-nigh drawn from the schoolmaster one of his great explosive bursts of laughter. Claude Melnotte—the manager of this travelling company—was unmistakably drunk. But all through the ramshackle performance, there was something of dignity and charm imported by the gentle little Pauline; and when she came to her grander passages—

'Love, sir, hath no sting.

What was the slight of a poor powerless girl,
To the deep wrong of this most vile revenge?'

or again—

‘I’ll work—

Toil—drudge—do what thou wilt—but touch me not ;
Let my wrongs make me sacred!’

—she rose to the occasion ; there was a genuine thrill in her voice ; and the school-master, all unused to stage effects, could not help exclaiming to himself in an undertone—

“Good! Good! That’s the real ring!
Well done!—well done!”

Meanwhile a close observer might have perceived that Pauline had become conscious of the presence of a friend in a not over-numerous audience ; and in the interval between Acts 3 and 4 a small neatly-folded note was brought to Allan’s companion.

“Will you excuse me for a moment?” said the lad, with a mantling blush ; and he rose from his seat and disappeared.

The moment stretched into minutes, the minutes into quarters of an hour ; and still he returned not. But when the play was all over, and Allan, with the rest of the crowd, had wandered out into the street, young Caird turned up again, with abject apologies ; and here was the barouche to carry them back to Glasgow. And then, perforce, supper at the Nike Club ; and further talk ; and

further talk; amidst which the musically-voiced Pauline was not forgotten.

It was not until about a fortnight after this experience—many things happening, and many arrangements having to be made in the meantime—that Allan Henderson found leisure to write out for Jessie's amusement an account of the 'Lady of Lyons,' as he had seen it played at a provincial theatre. It was rather a malicious account—Claude Melnotte's pronunciation—

' A palace lifting to eternal s'mer,'

and his tangled feet not lending themselves to the heroic—and it may have made Jess laugh a little, in her quiet way. Anyhow, the voluminous letter was finished just as the sunset was flaring red along the lonely cliffs of Cape St. Vincent, with the solitary lighthouse sending out from time to time its sudden, golden ray; and on the earliest possible occasion it was consigned to the post-office—that is to say, the busy little post-office in the main street of Gibraltar.

CHAPTER XV.

A SUMMONS.

“I HOPE I am not intruding,” said the councillor, in his politest manner, as he made his appearance at the parlour-door.

“To think of such a thing!” responded the little widow. “Come your ways in, Mr. McFadyen—bashfulness is not needed at all: I am sure there was capital good sense in the saying they used to have when I was a girl—‘*The house that we are not made welcome to, may the devil blow the roof off it!*’”

“Mother, mother, what fearful language!” cried Jess.

“But good sense—capital good sense,” insisted the widow. “Take a chair, Mr. McFadyen, and give us your news!”

“Na, na,” said Mr. McFadyen, modestly. “It’s not me, it’s Miss Jessie that has all the news now-a-days. Such long letters—and

such splendid doings—I never heard the like of; and it's but right and proper of Allan to make ye some requital of that kind, seeing the way Miss Jessie has been looking after his interests ever since he went away. I thought it was just real clever of her to get the house let to the end of the year; no one else would have thought of it, the evening classes being such an obstacle; but the reduced rent was the temptation, no doubt; and a fine thing for Allan—he ought to be greatly obliged to ye——”

“Oh, yes—oh, yes,” remarked the widow. “Allan and her, they get on fine when the breadth of Europe is between them; but if he were back here to-morrow, she would be at him again with her scoff-scoffing—the poor, good-natured lad, that has hardly a word to say for himself——”

“Allan—good-natured!” retorted Jess, in well-feigned amazement. “The temper of a mule, you mean! Good-natured? It's not Allan Henderson you're speaking of, mother, is it?”

“For shame—for shame!” said the widow, angrily. “Snap-snapping at him behind his back! And the poor lad with not too many friends——”

“Oh, as for that,” continued Jess, as she took down from the mantel-shelf a closely-written letter of several pages, “he can have but little time to think about us or anything we may be saying of him. Look at this, Mr. McFadyen; here is the last budget; and it’s a description of grandeurs enough to turn anybody’s head. First of all, he tells us about the Salaamlik——”

“Ay, just think of that, now, Mr. McFadyen,” said the widow—without attempting to pronounce the word.

“I’m not quite sure,” the councillor put in, when Jess proceeded—

“That is the state procession of the Sultan to the mosque. And it appears that the English Ambassador got cards of admission for Mr. Caird and Allan—admission to a pavilion, where they saw everything quite close by. Then the next day they had an invitation to visit the Imperial palaces—the Beyler-Bey and the Dolma Baghcha on the Bosphorus, and the Seraglio in Stamboul; and the Aide-de-camp came for them in one of His Majesty’s caiques—a long, beautiful boat, with ten rowers in costumes of white silk and red fez; and the two visitors were shown the wonderful display of jewels in

the Treasury; and were served with rose-leaf jam in cups encrusted with precious stones——”

“Do ye hear that—do ye hear that, Mr. McFadyen!” interposed Mrs. Maclean, not without a trace of exultation.

The Golden Horn—the Sweet Waters—the Suleimanieh—the Seven Towers; these were brave words; and Allan’s description of Constantinople by moonlight was no doubt vivid enough; but all the same Mr. McFadyen began to grow impatient and even resentful. He was losing in importance. He was being ignored. In the face of all these glories and dignities, what became of his position as a member of Duntroone Town Council?

“I would just say this,” he observed, “that as a kind of theatrical representation, what you have been reading, Miss Jessie, is very remarkable. But I’m thinking that a man’s value in the world depends on what he can do within his own sphere. It is there he must make his influence felt—it is there he becomes of consequence. I dare say, now, that after such a parade of Eastern magnificence and glitter, a question like the granting of spirit licences, here in Duntroone, must look a small and contemptible affair——”

“Indeed no—indeed no, Mr. McFadyen!” the widow protested. “What can interest us more than what is happening just close around us?”

He turned to her with alacrity.

“Ah, I see ye understand, Mrs. Maclean,” he said. “Ye understand what is of main consequence to us. And I will say this for myself, that when we came to consider whether we should grant any further spirit licenses, my brother Councillors were all at sixes and sevens, until I made the suggestion that the people themselves should be asked what they wanted. ‘And how are you going to do that?’ says they. ‘Why, by a plebiscity,’ says I. ‘The simplest thing possible.’”

“Ye’re right there, Mr. McFadyen,” agreed the widow. “There’s nothing like publicity. I’m no for any hole-and-corner business—no, no! Ye must keep an eye on them, Mr. McFadyen.”

“There’s one or two things,” continued the councillor, in a serious and thoughtful fashion, “that I would like to see done while I have life and health spared me to attend to these public concerns. There’s the condition of the North Pier—as I’ve said many

a time before, it's a disgrace, a perfect disgrace. And if we cannot acquire the property for ourselves—if the Board of Trade cannot help us—then at the very least we might make some arrangement about sanitary appliances. Why, a good sloshing-down every morning with a solution of carbolic acid—that of itself would be something.”

“Ye’re right again, Mr. McFadyen,” chimed in the widow, nodding approval. “Carbolic acid’s the thing—it’s just the best anti-semitic there is——”

“Is it antiseptic you mean, mother?” Jess interposed, rather crossly.

“Ay, that’s what I said,” continued the widow, with much complacency. “I’m sure the state of the North Pier is just crying aloud for something to be done.”

“I have undertaken to give it my best attention,” said the councillor, grandly; and he would probably have gone on to mention one or two further and important reforms but that at this moment a new-comer appeared, all eyes being instantly turned towards him.

It was the shoemaker. Long Lauchlan seemed perturbed and agitated; and his excuses for this sudden intrusion were somewhat incoherent.

“I had just half-a-minute,” said he. “It was the only shelter I could find; and I’m sure, Mrs. Maclean, you will not object to my coming in—until—until he has gone by.”

“But who, Lauchlan?” asked the widow. “What is the matter?”

“It’s that desperate man, Red Murdoch from Salen,” responded Lauchie, with another timorous glance towards the front shop, “and I was hearing that he was in the town and inquiring for me everywhere; and thinks I to myself I will keep out of the road, and he will be going awah hom by the evening steamer. Ay, and would you believe it, I was coming along Campbell Street, and there was he turning out of the lane by the Bank of Scotland, and if I had not escaped in here, he would hef got hold of me, and that’s the Bible’s truth——”

“But what did he want with you?” Jess demanded—though there were dark suspicions in her mind, prompting her to giggle.

“Oh, he’s a terrible man, that,” said Long Lauchie, in an awe-stricken way. “If Red Murdoch is for the drink, there’s no holding him back, no nor anyone he gets by the arm; and I heard he was searching for me—me

that's a Rechabite, and an officer of the Tent! But maybe he's gone by now——”

“What nonsense it is you are talking, Lauchlan MacIntyre!” said the widow, sharply. “Are you telling me that anyone can make you drink if you're not that way inclined? Where is your courage? I would not be frightened into any corner, if I were you—no, not for twenty Red Murdochs! Are you not free to walk along the streets? What kind of a country is this we're living in, then? I am ashamed to hear you, Lauchlan!”

Long Lauchie regarded her for a second.

“You're a woman, Mrs. Maclean,” said he, mysteriously. “And you hef no experience of Red Murdoch when he comes back from Calder Market, and would like a dram with one of his old friends. But he must hef gone by now—yes, indeed—he must hef gone by; and it's much obliged I am to you, Mrs. Maclean, for giving me the shelter; and I will go out now and down to the shore, and get a boat, and a lad to pull me over to Ardentrive Bay; and I will stop there until I see the Mull steamer passing out. Me that's a Rechabite could not be seen going into a public-house with Red

Murdoch, no matter what money he may have got at Calder.—May the Good Being preserve us!”

This last ejaculation was in Gaelic. For there was a sound as of someone entering the front shop. But this was no great red-bearded drover—this was Niall Gorach, who came to the half-opened door, peering in with his elfin eyes.

“Aw, Mr. MacIntyre,” said he, “it is here you are; and Red Murdoch he was sending me to find you; and I am to tell him where you are——”

“Son of the devil!” exclaimed Lauchlan—and he made a step forward, and seized the lad by the shoulder. “This is what you will be telling him now—are you listening?—you will tell Red Murdoch that my mother is dead, and the funeral will be in a week or two, and I hef gone aweh to Appin for the funeral, and it will be a month before I am back. Do you hear me now? Off with you, and find out Red Murdoch; and tell him I am dead, and my mother is dead; and he is to go aweh home by the evening steamer. Do you understand me now?”

Perhaps Niall Gorach did, and perhaps he did not; at all events he disappeared; and

Lauchlan turned with an air of apology to the widow.

“Mebbe, Mrs. Maclean, you will not mind my staying a few minutes longer. For Red Murdoch he might be in one street, or another street; but he’ll be going aweh hom by the evening boat whatever; and people that does not want to be drinking will be left in peace and quietness.”

Alas! at this very instant there was another sound outside—on the pavement and in the front shop—that re-awakened the conscious fear in Lauchlan’s eyes: it was a tread, heavy and irregular, that could not be mistaken for the catlike approach of Niall Gorach. Almost simultaneously a gigantic form appeared at the door; and the great, shaggy visage of Red Murdoch stared bemusedly in upon the little group. At first he did not seem to recognise anyone—not even the shoemaker, who had slunk into a twilit corner.

“A mild woman—a mild woman,” said the huge drover, in Gaelic, as he regarded Mrs. Maclean.

“A young girl—a handsome young girl,” he continued, in his occult approval, as for a moment he contemplated Jess.

But now he came to Lauchie, half-hidden in that dusky retreat; and at once a roar of delighted laughter broke from him; he strode forward and laid a vast and hairy paw on the arm of the shrinking shoemaker.

“Are you there, son of my heart! And it is a good day, this day, when I have the money in my pocket, and Long Lauchlan to be coming with me for a dram. It is a fine day, this day: Lauchlan, my son, the grass that is not grown is suitable for the unborn calf; but here I have the money; and my thanks to the good chance that brings me a friend——”

“Away—away!” cried Lauchlan, trying to free himself from that tremendous grip. “I am not for any drink. I will not have any drink. I am not one of the drinking kind——”

The stupefied drover gazed and gazed; and then he shook his head savagely, as if he would clear his brain from these encumbering and bewildering mists and fogs; and then he tried to drag the shoemaker out into the open, to see if it was possible to understand what all this meant. But now it was that the councillor intervened. Mr. McFadyen was a little man, and rather fat and scant

of breath ; nevertheless he had a valiant soul —especially when Jessie Maclean happened to be looking on ; and without more ado he seized Red Murdoch by the elbow.

“ Let the man alone ! ” said he. “ Are you not aware that he has become a Rechabite ? ”

“ And who are you ? ” said the big drover, turning to glare down on this audacious interloper.

“ I am a member of the town-council,” replied Peter, without one pin’s point of quailing, “ and I have sufficient influence with the police-authorities to see that no one is allowed to come into any house and disturb and frighten decent, quiet people.”

“ Oh, there is no frightening of any one,” said Jess, who indeed was more inclined to laugh. “ But if you are going by the evening steamer, Mr. Murdoch, it is about time you were walking along to the quay ; and Mr. McFadyen’s house is close by ; and I am sure, if you went along with him, he would be glad to have a parting glass with you — and you could leave Mr. MacIntyre to his own ways and habits.”

But at this Red Murdoch drew himself up.

“ Who goes through the thorns for me, I’ll go through the briars for him,” he said, in

a dignified manner. "And I will take a parting glass with the gentleman, if he is agreeable. But it is not I that am in the custom of going from one house to another house and asking for a glass of whisky, when I can pay for my own whisky. And as for the Rechabites: well, I hope there will be plenty of Rechabites, and more and more Rechabites—until the devil takes them to light his fires with!"

And thereupon the red-bearded Mull drover—still somewhat proud and offended—suffered himself to be led away by the councillor; while Long Lauchie, tremulously thankful over his escape from this formidable temptation, came forth from his corner, and went sadly away home. And all that the little widow said, when they had quitted the premises, was this—

"The men are strange folk. And it's a Heaven's mercy when they dinna come to blows."

But during the subsequent and grateful quiet Jess remained for a long time silent and absent-minded; and she still held Allan Henderson's letter in her hand.

"Mother," she said, after a while, "I suppose, now, Mr. McFadyen will imagine that

Allan is thinking only of himself and all these fine adventures. I did not care to read any more of the letter to him. What would be the use? And what am I to answer to Allan himself, and to all his anxious questionings—week after week—week after week very soon it will be months—and me with hardly a word of news to send him? How can I make him understand that Barbara will not write, and that she will not see any one, and that her only wish appears to be that she should be forgotten, and her name never mentioned among us? And what is to come of it? Sometimes I am dreading that there will be a terrible harm.”

And again she said—

“Mother, would you mind if I went through to Glasgow for a few days, or maybe longer? Mrs. Guthrie might give me a bed; for I would not like to be all by myself in a temperance hotel in a big town like that. I must see Barbara—I cannot sleep at nights for thinking of her——”

“And many’s the wakeful hour I have,” rejoined the little widow, “over the poor lass and her troubles. And as you say, Jessie, what will come of it, if she refuses every permission, and will have no comfort and no

hope, and wishes to be as one that is dead to us? She was brought up in the fresh air and the open; and to be shut close within black walls—dear, dear me!—what is to come of it?”

“Mother,” the girl said, “I will go to Glasgow—and you must not hurry me back.”

“So next day Jess made her small preparations, and set out for the great city; and there she received a most friendly welcome from Mrs. Guthrie, who kept a baker’s shop in the Gallowgate. At first her letters home were filled merely with a vague misgiving; a misgiving that was perhaps mainly caused by her perplexity; for she could not fathom and get to comprehend this strange mood of mind on the part of the hapless prisoner. But after a while those letters struck a sharper note of alarm; and at last there arrived a telegram begging Mrs. Maclean to go through to Glasgow at once, or, if that were impossible, to send Mr. McFadyen in her stead.

CHAPTER XVI.

FAREWELL !

ONE morning towards noon two travellers who had arrived at Calais over-night were walking up and down the breezy promenade of the Quai de Marée, with an occasional glance now at the boats in the harbour and again at the wide waters of the Channel, that were flashing and rushing in silver-and-yellow before a brisk east wind.

“ Well, Henderson,” said the younger of the two, “ you’ve come a precious long way for what seems to me a mere matter of convention.”

“ Convention ? ” repeated the schoolmaster, abruptly. “ What convention ? I could do nothing else. What else could I do ? ”

“ I beg your pardon,” continued the younger man, with quick pacification,

“perhaps I should have said a matter of principle. Anyhow, all that sad business in Glasgow must have been long over by now ; and I hardly understand why you should have thought it necessary—— ”

“ At the very least,” said his companion, “ I can go on to Duntroone, and thank those good friends who stood in my place, when I was far enough away. No : my starting for home, as soon as that message reached me at Moudanieh, was an inevitable thing ; I could not do otherwise ; but you—why you should have undertaken such a tedious and aimless journey—only to stop here—I have not been able to make that out yet—— ”

“ Why I came back with you ? ” said young Caird, lightly. “ Why I came on to Calais ? Oh, for a frolic. Or for company’s sake. Or to practise self-denial. Self-denial, most likely. You see, there can’t be anything to do in this dull little hole of a town ; so, until you reappear, I suppose I shall spend most of my time on this promenade, strolling about, and addressing polished and elegant speeches to my respected relatives over the water. ‘ My dear friends, if you were to learn that I had returned so far, and that at this moment I was almost within sight of English shores,

you would no doubt jump to the conclusion that I meant to cross ; and you would be delighted to think that a certain compact was about to be broken. But I am not going to do anything of the kind—not at all. I am playing for too important a stake. There is a little matter of family recognition to be added in, when the stipulated year expires, and when I shall have the pleasure of presenting to you a young person whose accomplishments, and refinement, and grace will be quite an addition to your domestic circles—and something of a novelty too.”

But here the lame lad sent a rather wistful look away to the north.

“ After all, Henderson, it is a temptation,” he confessed. “ I do believe, if I were to cross with you by this next boat, I could slip through to Glasgow without any chance of being discovered, and meet you somewhere on the way back. Let’s see : you’ll be in London between four and five ; then on by the Scotch mail to-night ; Glasgow quite early to-morrow morning. Then the—the company are playing at Falkirk just now——”

“ How do you know that ? ” said the school-master, turning upon him sharply.

“ Oh, you needn’t be afraid,” responded

the lad, with a laugh. "Direct communication only is forbidden in the bond; and there's been nothing of that kind. But one may have a friend here or there, don't you perceive?"

"Yes," observed the schoolmaster, "you seem to have borne this separation, so far, with great equanimity."

"Oh, I assure you, I have kept strictly to the terms!" the younger man exclaimed, placidly. "Not but that there may have been moments—just now, for example—when one's common sense rebels. Or which is the common-sense—impatience over this preposterous compact, or the determination, now that so much has been gone through, to hold on to the end? That is a conundrum I can study while you are away in the north; and you have been setting me a good many of late to puzzle over. I remember a very pretty one—'Can any natural instinct or impulse be in itself criminal, or is it only criminal in so far as society, for its own protective purposes, chooses to declare it criminal?' That's a very dainty suggestion—something like a cartload of dynamite fit to burst up the whole moral order of the universe. For example, my natural impulse

at this moment, if I were within reach of that fishing-smack, would be to tip the skipper into the sea. Is there any such loathsome sight as a fat Frenchman in a temper? Look at his clenched fists—look at him jumping and dancing with rage—listen to his howls and shrieks at those jibing and mocking people on the quay—and every moment he knows the wind is carrying him further and further out of hearing. But come away, now,” he continued, “and let’s walk along to the steamer. And about my natural impulse to tip that skipper into the sea: wasn’t it perfectly justifiable? If society were to declare it criminal, it would be because society had never witnessed such a deplorable exhibition.”

“Lad, lad,” said the schoolmaster, absently, “it is well with you that you can make a joke of such questions. Sometimes they come a little more seriously into human life.”

That was all; and there was no unkindliness in the hint; but the younger man, who had got to know a good deal of his companion’s story, quickly and skilfully changed the subject—and easily, too, for now they were about to separate, and their final arrangements had to be made.

And thus it was that Allan Henderson, journeying alone, made his way northward to Glasgow, where indeed there was not much for him to do beyond visiting two graves—grave of wife and grave of friend; and in his long reveries he may have pondered over the strangely devious paths by which those two children of the far and lonely outer isles, who in life had never known each other, had at length reached this last resting-place, within sight and sound of the great murmuring city. As for him, Glasgow had become a town of dark memories and regrets; and he seemed to breathe more freely when on the next day he found himself in the train that was bearing him away out to the western seas—though nevertheless he looked back, and still looked back, so long as any of the grey houses and the tall chimneys were visible.

It was rather a wet and boisterous afternoon when in due course he arrived at the well-known little station fronting the harbour; but delicious to his nostrils were the soft, fresh, rain-laden gusts that blew in across the bay; and he forgot all about Pentelicus, and Marathon, and the basking slopes of Hymettus when he beheld the

ancient and ivied castle tall and dark against the windy skies, and when he saw the wild cloud-wreaths moving and intertwisting in silver and purple above the sombre Morven hills. His heart swelled, and his throat was like to choke him, when he heard the kindly speech from which he had so long been absent; and he was glad that neither Jessie Maclean nor her mother was here to meet him; if he had been less agitated he might have guessed that it was only part of Jess's thoughtfulness that had made them stay away, while here was the alert and indefatigable Mr. McFadyen to represent them.

"I was to ask you to excuse them," said the councillor, eagerly snatching at handbags and parcels, whether they belonged to Allan or not, "and I've got a room ready for you at my house, for, as ye've doubtless heard, your own house has been let; but the widow and her daughter will be glad to see you later on, when you've plenty of time, and when you've got more accustomed to the town——"

At this Allan stopped short, and stood stock still—here amongst the luggage, and the porters, and the bustling passengers.

"McFadyen, what is't you mean?" said

he. "Do they hold me answerable for all that has happened? Has Mrs. Maclean cast me out?"

"Dod bless my soul and body!" exclaimed the councillor, in great confusion and fright; was this the result of his trying to obey Jess Maclean's earnest injunctions? "You'll not let a body speak! They thought they might be in the way—and—and I've got everything arranged for ye—as well as I could in my poor dwelling; and we'll go along to see the Macleans as soon as ever you like, I mean as soon as you've had a bite of something. And the thrashing—oh, yes, Miss Jessie was sure ye'd like to hear of the fearful thrashing I gave the station-master on Saturday afternoon: ye see, Jamie Gilmour has been out o' practice all through the summertime because of being so' busy—morning till night far too busy to think of the links——"

By this time Mr. McFadyen had secured a porter; and when Allan's not very cumbrous luggage had been put on the barrow, the two friends set out to accompany it—for the councillor's house was but a little way off.

"And then," continued Peter, with dawning merriment, "I'll tell ye the truth—I'll

confess the truth: I had been practising pretty hard, and not letting on to Jamie. There's Tolmie, the professional, hanging about the now; and I was getting a few bit lessons from him, d'ye understand—on the quiet; so that when the ball did happen to trinkle away down into that beast of a hollow by the dyke, I began to find myself no just quite so helpless——Here, you thick-headed gomeril, where the mischief are ye going?"

This last execration was hurled at the porter, who, having recognised the schoolmaster, and assuming that this was the schoolmaster's luggage, was for leaving the harbour-front to get away up to Battery Terrace. When it had again been forced in on his mind that they were all of them bound for the councillor's dwelling, Peter continued his brisk conversation—as had been enjoined on him.

"It was a wonderful clever thing," said he, "of Miss Jessie to get your house let to those friends o' hers from Peterhead; for it suits them just splendid—the ailing lass having been ordered to try the soft west-country air; and it matters little to them to have the lower rooms occupied by the

Latin classes for an hour or two in the evening——”

“If Mr. Fenwick would not mind,” said Allan, “I would like to look in for a few minutes to-night, just to see the lads.”

“To be sure—to be sure! Capital—a capital idea!” cried Peter, approvingly; and now they were arrived at his house; and here was the great, gawky, good-natured, gooseberry-eyed servant-lass ready to help with the luggage; and in the adjoining parlour the dinner-table was laid—and laid for two only.

For this also was part of Jessie’s kindly scheming; though her mother had furtively cried a little when she learned that Allan, on his return home, was to be received in a strange house. But Jess insisted; she would have no family gathering over the way, with its painful blank only too conspicuous; and of course she found in the councillor a willing ally. So it was that Peter and his guest sate down at this table by themselves; and the big, bland servant-lass brought in successively cockie-leekie, boiled salmon, and roast fowl and bacon; while the loquacious host, suddenly remembering that he had dropped the story of the discomfiture and

dismay of the station-master, resumed the narrative, and launched into a Homeric description of his own exploits and his enemy's chagrin.

"Dod, man," he cried, between bursts of irrepressible laughter, "ye never saw any human creature in such a state of bewilderment. All the tricks that Tolmie had been showing me seemed to come in handy from the very beginning—but more especially at the dyke—more especially at the dyke—for I made a bad hash of my first attempt, and the ball did not get over, and Jamie he sets to work sniggering. 'Peter,' says he, 'away back wi' ye thirty yards, and try again.' 'Jamie,' says I, 'keep a calm sough for a minute.' And then I gets out my lofter; and I steadied my aim; and click! goes the ball into the air—well and clean over and away! 'It's an infernal fluke!' says he. 'I'll bet ye half-a-crown on the game!' says I. 'Done with you, Peter,' says he, 'and you'll be whistling another tune before I've finished with ye!' Was I? Was I?" continued the councillor, with another hilarious roar. "Man, ye should have seen Jamie get angrier and angrier as we went on; and when he grows savage, it's all up with him;

he just bashes the ground.—I wonder there's an ounce of land or soil left in Argyllshire! And his astonishment when we got to the end, and totted up the scores! 'Jamie,' says I, 'what kind of a tune would you like to be whistling now?' 'Oh, go to the devil!' says he—and ye can imagine what's in a man's mind when that's all he's got to say for himself.—Allan, Miss Jessie was saying maybe you yourself would like to take a turn round the links to-morrow."

The schoolmaster shook his head.

"I must get away again as soon as ever I can," said he. "Young Caird is waiting for me in Calais; and very friendly of him it was to come all the way across Europe with me."

"And for how long are you off again?"

"For some nine months or so—whatever will make up a year from the time we first started."

The councillor hesitated for a second or so.

"Then maybe you would like to go along at once to Mrs. Maclean's?"

"Well, I would—though I need not hurry you."

"I was to bring you as soon as it was

convenient to yourself," McFadyen interposed, dexterously; and in a few minutes the two men were outside and on their way to Campbell Street.

It was a sad enough meeting; but Mr. McFadyen had had his instructions; the talk was about all manner of ordinary things, with occasional references to Allan's forthcoming departure and future plans. It is true that now and again the eyes of the little widow would fill with tears, even when she was trying to join in as bravely as any of them; and Jess seemed rather to keep apart—she was summoned away more than once to the front shop; it was on Peter McFadyen that the difficulties of the situation chiefly fell, and he acquitted himself admirably. Nor was there any need to wish the councillor away, that more intimate questions might be asked and answered; for Jess had communicated all the news by letter; up to the arrival of the schoolmaster at Calais, he had heard from her at every possible point. Perhaps it was for this reason that she now held herself somewhat aloof.

At length Mr. McFadyen took out his watch and said—

"I'm thinking, Allan, you had some intention of going up to the Terrace to look in on those lads. They'll be at work now——"

"Indeed, yes," said the schoolmaster, rising. "And yet I've not said a word to you, Mrs. Maclean, nor to you, Jessie, about the gratitude I owe you for all you've done for me. I'm just crushed into silence—I cannot speak——"

"And the least said the better, Allan," returned the widow, with the tears showing again. "It would have been a good thing for you if you had never seen any of us——"

"Well, come along," said McFadyen, briskly. "I'm sure the lads will be glad to be remembered." And therewith—Jess somewhat lingering in the background—the councillor and Allan said good-night to their friends, and left the little parlour that used to be so familiar.

The youths were all busy at their tasks up there in Battery Terrace; but when Allan appeared at the door—doubtful about entering, and ready to apologise for his interruption—first one and then another turned and recognised him, and presently there was a general if timid rapping of knuckles on

the wooden desks to give him a welcome. Still uncertain as to whether he should go or leave, he could but nod a greeting to this or that well-known face; and then, drawn by old association and remembrances, he made bold to step forward; while the young man who was his substitute rose from his chair and came along to meet him.

"No, no," said Allan. "I must not hinder you. Go on; and I will sit down here for a minute or two." And he took a seat at the end of the nearest bench, as it chanced by the side of one of the youngest of the students, who had been a special favourite of his.

The master in charge was equal to the occasion. He announced that he would send round, written on a piece of paper, a literal translation of a couple of verses from Ovid; and the students could then occupy themselves in turning the English back into Latin. Nor did he leave them without a little friendly guidance here and there, when he had read out the English lines; he suggested one or two of the equivalents; reminded them of the difference between "capillus," "coma," and "crinis"; and so forth; and then, when he had set them all

going, he returned to Allan and to Mr. McFadyen, free to talk about the business of the school or anything else they pleased.

It was to the councillor he had to address himself; for Allan was much too interested in the efforts of the diligent youth who was seated next him. It was quite mechanical work, of course, this dove-tailing of longs and shorts to secure the necessary six feet and five; but nevertheless it demanded some little ingenuity; and as the lad had quickly jotted down two or three alternatives of the principal nouns, Allan (who was not acquainted with the original) could at least indicate with his forefinger what might be tried next as a solution of the puzzle. Well, as it subsequently turned out, those two together did not quite arrive at the elegance of Ovid; but they were not so very far away from it; and the master eventually proclaimed—amidst general giggling—that Mr. Henderson and his companion might be said to have produced a very creditable version.

“Ah, I’d like fine to be back among those boys again,” said Allan, as he and the councillor were strolling homewards together, for a final pipe and a chat before getting to bed.

“All in good time—all in good time, Allan, lad,” responded Mr. McFadyen, cheerfully. “And in the meanwhile I’m glad to hear that the numbers are not dropping of—no, no—rather the reverse.”

Next day Allan was to leave by the 12.40 train; and as he was to be away for so long, Mrs. Maclean herself came to the platform, accompanied by Jess. Mr. McFadyen was also here; likewise, of course, the station-master; and one or two others. Long Lauchie did not put in an appearance, for he would have had to pass the refreshment-room twice, and he was avoiding such places.

“And we’ll not be seeing you now, Allan, till the middle of next summer,” said the little widow; “and who can tell what may happen through all the long, long winter?”

“Why, the best—we must just hope for the best!” said the councillor, gallantly. “And whether it’s to be eight months, or whether it’s to be ten months, Allan knows first-rate where there’s a welcome always waiting for him.”

The guard came up, and a move was made for the carriages. There was much hand-shaking, and bidding of good-bye; and even Jess, who had rather hung back, had now

to advance, to take farewell—which she did silently.

“And you will write to us often and often,” this was the widow’s last word, as the train began to move, “and Jessie will write back to you, and tell you all that is going on—will you not now, Jessie?”

But Jess did not seem to hear—and presently the line of carriages had crept away from the platform, and was bending round the curve that in a moment or two would completely hide it from sight.

CHAPTER XVII.

“AT EACH REMOVE.”

It was during this winter that the widow began to give herself airs. On some former occasions the Purser had been rather inclined to impose on this little circle—or, at least, to impress it—with his talk of travel; but now that Allan's budgets of news kept arriving every other week or so, the Purser's foreign experiences shrank into insignificance; and Mrs. Maclean was proud to know that it was one of her own kith and kin—one of her own family almost—who had these wonderful tales to tell. At first Jessie, to whom the letters were addressed, allowed her mother free access to them; and the widow would read and re-read them, asking questions, and discreetly getting to understand, before communicating with her neighbours.

“Dear me, Jess,” she would say, for

example, “what’s this he writes about the Americans? — about the Americans continually boasting of their manifest density? It’s not possible! Poor things, they cannot be so stupid as all that!”

“It’s their manifest destiny, mother,” Jess would make answer, with a touch of impatience. “The Americans stupid? Don’t you see what he says further on?—that there’s but the one thing left for them to invent—and they’ll be having it before long—and that’s a mechanical maidservant. He says that when the American man gets to realise the misery that the American woman endures through the difficulties of domestic service, he is bound to come to her aid with machinery.”

But in process of time Jess grew more chary of showing these letters; and at length she kept them entirely to herself, merely reading out to her mother such accounts of ongoings and adventures as might be expected to interest her. For Allan had but the one true and safe confidante in his former home; and there were many intimate and personal things he could write about to Jess that Jess alone could comprehend; and perhaps some of these things,

seen from afar and with clearer vision, were altering in look. Anyhow, Jess no longer showed the letters; and perhaps her mother did not notice the changed condition of affairs; she was satisfied to hear that Allan was in excellent spirits and quite delighted with his travelling companion.

Not that the closing months of the old year were otherwise devoid of incident. Far from it. All kinds of things were happening. The station-master won the great golfing handicap, carrying off the silver-plated claret-jug which now adorns his sideboard. Niall Gorach and three other lads were indicted for trespassing on the grounds of Aultna-shellach, in pursuit of rabbits; but the charge was found not proven, though the Sheriff significantly refused to allow their expenses. The shoemaker had found a new doctrine and principle of human life, which he preached to all and sundry; and which, interpreted from the Gaelic, and reduced to a more compact formula, was to the effect that "tea and religion were the two supreme comforts of existence; but that a wise man would avoid immoderate indulgence in either." The councillor had been prevailed upon to receive for a time a nephew of his

who had fallen ill in Glasgow—Mrs. Maclean observed that the doctors had hinted something about “angelina pectoris”—and so completely did the sea air restore the young man to his ordinary health, and so frankly did he show himself interested in his uncle’s business, that Mr. McFadyen had serious thoughts of taking him in as a junior partner, to the securing, later on, of some portion of leisure for himself. Then, one morning, the steamer *Islesman*, from the Outer Hebrides, hove in sight with all her flags flying; and as she came sailing into the entrance of the bay, she fired off her signal-cannon with a report that sent the jackdaws about the ivied ruin squawking and yawping into the breezy and silver skies. The reason soon became known. Jack Ogilvie, formerly Purser of the *Aros Castle*, was on board; and he was bringing with him his blushing bride, who hitherto had been the Widow McAlister, proprietress of the Anchor Hotel, Portree. There were many people in Duntroone ready and glad to greet the newly-married couple; but all the same Jack Ogilvie found time to call upon the Macleans; and his wife—a buxom, pleasant-featured young woman of thirty, with coal-black hair and cheeks of the

colour of red pickled cabbage (for the wind was gusty and cold)—received a most friendly welcome from Jess and her mother. They were going south on their wedding-jaunt—perhaps even as far as London; but it was intimated that on their return the fortunate bridegroom was to take up his position as general manager of the Anchor Hotel, which is a famous and flourishing hostelry in those distant parts.

By and bye came the New Year; and with it there arrived a capacious chest that had been sent all the way from Yokohama. When the widow, with the eager curiosity of a child, began to undo the unfamiliar and convoluted packing-material, her delight soon gave way to amazement.

“Preserve us!” she cried. “Where could Allan get the money to waste on all this extravagance—I never saw the like——”

“Mother,” said Jess, “did I not tell you? Most of the things are from Mr. Caird.”

“But how could Mr. Caird be hearing anything about me or you?” continued the widow, as with cautious fingers she unwound the bandages from an extremely pretty tea-set. “How was he to know anything about us?”

Jess looked a little embarrassed.

"Well," said she, "Allan was sending me a kind of explanation, that during many a long hour of travel he used to talk about the people at home; and Mr. Caird got it into his head that he had become quite acquainted with us; and he is a whimsical and obstinate young gentleman—so Allan says; and when there was some mention made of the possibility of sending a New-Year's-Day present, he would insist on taking part. And Mr. Caird wrote a letter too——"

"Ay?—and why did ye not show it to me? Where is it?"

Jess pretended to be busy with the cups; and her mother did not notice the slight colour that had mounted to the girl's forehead.

"Mr. Caird's letter, do you mean, mother?" she said. "It is over at the house. But it is only a sort of friendly apology for sending you these things; and he writes in a very nice and good-natured way. He says he is greatly obliged to you; for it is of such importance that one's travelling-companion should be contented in mind; and Allan was satisfied and at rest because you were looking after all his affairs for him in his absence——"

But here the mother did grow suspicious.

“Jess,” said she, abruptly, “go at once and get me that letter.”

“But maybe I burned it, mother,” she answered.

“Then are you telling me lies about what was in it?”

“Why should I?” said Jess—but with averted face.

“Because if the young man knows anything at all about it,” said the widow, boldly, “he must know very well that it is you, and not me, that has been looking after Allan’s affairs. Very well he must know that; and very well Allan knows it; and the two of them together, when they were buying these presents to be sent across the sea, who was it they were thinking of? It was you, Jessie—and no one else—that is as clear as the daylight; and you need not stand there to deny it. Would they be sending these fine pieces of silk and sewing to one at my years?”

“Mother, you are entirely mistaken,” said Jess, quite as bluntly. “Did you not look at the label?—I think that is the best proof of all! They have been sent to you, and they are yours; I am not wishing for any of

them ; and by and bye we will see what can be made of them for you. That will be your best way of thanking Allan, when he comes back to his own country.”

But there was many a long day and many a long month to be got through before there was any prospect of that wistfully looked-for return ; though as time went on those many-paged communications that Jess so carefully treasured up and concealed began to arrive from ever-lessening distances. And at last there came an afternoon ; and the councillor insisted and better insisted that Miss Jessie should go along with him to the station ; and those two, when the train slowed in and stopped, beheld a stranger step out from one of the compartments—a bronzed and bearded man, whose dark eyes aflame with delight seemed to say he was not so much of a stranger after all ; and Jess, involuntarily shrinking back, would have the councillor go forward to receive him ; and this McFadyen, when he had recovered his senses, instantly proceeded to do. But the next moment Jess found both her hands caught and held.

“I’ve seen many a place since I left you last, Jessie,” Allan said, “but never one half

as welcome as the first glimpse of Duntroone Bay."

"But where's your luggage, man?—where the mischief is your luggage?" cried the councillor, determined on asserting his importance.

Then the schoolmaster had to turn to explain, rather nervously, that he had not brought any luggage with him. He had come straight away through as quickly as ever he could. His immediate plans were not fixed yet. And so, with many questions and answers, the three of them set out for Campbell Street, Jess alone keeping somewhat silent.

The widow was greatly pleased with the change in Allan's appearance; she declared that his beard, his robuster frame, his firmer carriage, lent him an air of authority that was necessary for a schoolmaster; she was proud to hear that he had nearly finished his translation of the unpronounceable poem, and that already he had secured a publisher; and she had no sufficient words of praise for young Mr. Caird, who had undertaken to befriend Allan Henderson in more ways than one.

"And, maybe, Allan, lad," she continued,

blithely, "maybe Jessie was right after all, when she was telling us of the great things in store for you, and when she was urging you to do this and do that. Maybe it will be coming true. That was a fine saying they used to have: '*The day is longer than the brae: we will win to the top yet.*' And surely you've had enough of wandering now; when are you going to settle down among your own folk?"

The question seemed to disconcert him, and he evaded it somehow; for indeed, despite his obvious happiness in being once more in the midst of these old friends, from time to time a look of uncertainty and care would cross his face, as if all were not well. However, at this moment the girl Christina appeared to take charge of the shop; and the widow, rising, forthwith invited her guests to step across to the house, where supper had been left in readiness for them. She herself led the way, and the councillor was talking to her; Jess and Allan followed—with little speech between them.

But as they were going along the twilight entrance leading to the staircase, Allan put his hand gently on her arm, and in obedience to this mute prayer she lingered behind for

a moment, while the others passed out of sight.

"I got your letter in Glasgow, Jessie," said he, in an undertone. "And is that the last word you have for me?"

"Are we not better as we are?" she made answer, with her eyes downcast. "Did you not hear what mother was saying a minute ago of the future that seems lying before you?——"

"I know nothing about that," he replied. "And whatever it might be, I should have no interest in it, I should have no care in it, unless you were with me. Jessie, do you think I cannot recognise how stupid and blind I have been? I never knew what you were—well, I knew you were always and always my best and dearest friend and ally—but I never knew what you really were until one after the other those long letters came; and then you spoke so freely and so kindly; it was like yourself talking, with nobody by; and many's the night I lay awake reading and re-reading, page after page, and trying to think I could hear the tides off Lismore, and smell the scent of the wind blowing down from the hills. And then when I ventured in writing back to you to say one or two things—wondering whether

our close and sure friendship might not blossom into something finer and nearer—and when I found that you were not so very angry—I began to dream wild dreams. I suppose I was mistaken. I suppose you thought, with such a distance between us, that it was hardly necessary to be strict and cautious of speech. But now—if this is to be your last word—this that I got at Glasgow——”

“ Allan,” she said, piteously, “ surely we are better off as we are—— ”

“ Oh, I know there are plenty of reasons why you should not throw yourself away on one such as I,” he exclaimed. “ Do you think I do not know ! Plenty of reasons—do you think I have not pondered over them, night after night ? And I suppose it was a sort of madness of impertinence that got hold of me, to think that any such possibility could come into my life. But I do not wish to vex you, Jessie, or harass you ; I can go—and this time for good.”

“ But why not let us be as we are, Allan ? ” she said again—and not even yet did she dare to raise her eyes.

When he spoke, it was in a grave kind of way.

“That is my decree of banishment, then,” he said, slowly; “and Duntroone will see me no more.”

. . .

Nothing short of consternation prevailed at the little supper-table when it became known that the schoolmaster was leaving the very next morning; and the councillor, anxious to hide his ignorance and bewilderment, could only seek refuge in the remark that if Allan went by the 8.20 train he might have to change at Stirling, to get on to Glasgow. For there were no explanations offered, and none could well be asked; and if there was some vague mention of Allan's further movements it was half-intimated and half-understood that these were in some way connected with young Caird and certain schemes of his. In truth the situation was altogether too embarrassing; this reunion, that promised so much, was found to be full of perplexity and chagrin; and at the earliest moment the two visitors withdrew—not a word having been said to solve the mystery.

. . .

And perhaps that was a long night for Jess—a long and wakeful night of thinking and tears; at all events, when she got up the

next morning, she was in a languid and listless state ; and more than once she looked at her little silver watch, that lay on the table. And then, as if moved by some sudden impulse, she began to dress quickly ; and again she would look at the watch ; and again she would go to the mirror, to see if those clear and gentle grey eyes bore less trace of the slow, immeasurable hours of pain. Finally, at a few minutes after eight, she issued forth from the house. It was a beautiful morning—the world all brisk and busy—the sunlight lying soft and golden on the slopes of Kerrara—the sea blue and shining far away out towards Lismore. She hurried along by the harbour-front ; her eyes were alert, but no one she knew was visible ; at length her glance happened to fall on the clock above the railway-station. And then her heart seemed to stand still, with sickness and fright. She pulled out her watch : it had played her false : at this very instant the train must be starting. She could not hasten her pace ; a kind of paralysis of despair had come over her ; and yet she struggled on, and eventually entered the station, only to be confronted by the wide and empty platform. She stood irresolute

for a moment ; then she hid her face with her hands ; and crying and sobbing helplessly she would have sought some concealment by the side of the bookstall but that the station-master chanced to have perceived her. He immediately came up.

“ Bless me, Miss Jessie, what is the matter ? ” he exclaimed : for that Jess—the light-hearted, the laughing-eyed, the merry-tongued Jess—should be so completely broken down was a strange thing to him. And rose-red indeed was she before she would give him the remotest hint of an explanation.

“ Well, I’m sure I am sorry for such an unfortunate mistake,” said Mr. Gilmour. “ I was wondering that none of you were along to say good-bye to Allan—none but Mr. McFadyen, and he was going on as far as Taynuilt. But if you would like to send a message, I could telegraph it through to Dalmally, and the guard would find him—— ”

“ Oh, could you send a message to Allan, Mr. Gilmour ? ” Jess cried.

“ Yes, indeed—— ”

“ And ask him to come back !—ask him to come back by the next train !—— ”

“ Oh, yes, I can do that,” said Mr. Gilmour,

in kindly fashion. “But the message—it would have to be in your name, Miss Jessie—or he would not understand.”

Jess, uncertain, distracted, confused—and with the conscious colour burning more clearly than ever in her face—hesitated, and yet only for a second.

“If you think that will be better—if you think he will understand, Mr. Gilmour,” said she, shyly—and thereupon the good-natured station-master (perhaps with his own little guesses concerning this crisis) hurried away to the telegraph-office.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SAIL.

ONE morning, some two or three weeks after these transactions, the steamer *Grenadier* was about to set out on its usual round of the western islands, when Mrs. Maclean, Jess, Allan Henderson, and the councillor came together along the quay, stepped in by the gangway, and took their places in a modest corner of the upper deck. This was a little entertainment that had been planned by the widow, probably as a mark of satisfaction over her daughter's betrothal; it also coincided with the coming to an end of the schoolmaster's long period of idleness; for in these few weeks he had made his final arrangements for resuming work.

They had waited for a fine day and they had got it—too fine, perchance, for there was

promise of a blaze of heat as soon as the sun had dispersed the thin network of white cloud that stretched all across the heavens. At present this was a dreamlike world they were about to enter, with hardly any definite colour in it; the sea, instead of showing its wind-driven northern blue, lay in long swathes of opalescent calm; the hills, behind a tremulous veil of haze, were unsubstantial, and featureless, and remote. Nevertheless, Duntroone, with its spacious bay, its ivied castle at the point, its semi-circle of houses and terraced gardens, and its background of wooded hills, looked quite cheerful at this early hour. And soon, when the last passenger had been received on board, and when the hawsers had been cast off, the steamer slowly left the pier; and by and bye, as those familiar aspects of the shore were gradually receding, the voyagers found themselves approaching that other and silent and mysterious phantom-universe, that seemed as yet hardly to have awakened out of the sleep of the night.

Now it was the widow who had suggested and even insisted on this little frolic; but it was the councillor who must needs take the management of it; and not only did he do

everything that was necessary for his own party, he was also able to come to the assistance of more than one group of English strangers, who gladly welcomed any information about Craigenure, and Loch Aline, and the Manse of Fiunary. Before they had got half way up the Sound of Mull, Mr. McFadyen occupied quite a prominent position; he was asked the name of this, the name of that; and he greatly comforted two elderly maiden ladies, who had paid a visit to Tangiers the previous spring, by assuring them that there was no necessity for riding pickaback on going ashore at Staffa. Jessie's malicious grey eyes were demurely laughing, but she kept her thoughts to herself. Allan had fallen into an absent way of regarding this or that stranger with a gaze at once profound and abstracted; perhaps he was trying to read feature lines. The little widow was just as happy and content as she could be; she did not care to talk to anybody; the mountains, the woods and corries, and the increasing bursts of sunlight went by in a pleasant panoramic fashion; and more than once she blithely murmured to herself, "*The day is longer than the brae; we'll win to the top yet.*" And meanwhile Peter had established

himself as the man of position and importance on this upper deck.

By the time they were nearing Tobermory, the sun had effectually cleared away the fleecy veil of cloud; and while they stopped at the quay, the heat pouring down into the circular little harbour almost began to equal that in the immediate neighbourhood of the scarlet funnels; but presently they were off and away again; and when they had come in sight of the wider spaces—from the mighty rampart of Ardnamurchan facing the Atlantic out to the long, low-lying reefs of Coll and Tiree—there was an occasional and grateful stirring of wind—a stirring of wind that could be watched as it came creeping in silver breadths across the still, shining, azure plain. And then, far away, and one by one, the strange basaltic islands came into view—Carnaburg, Fladda, the Dutchman, and their lonely brethren; while nearer at hand, under the lofty cliffs of western Mull, lay the green-shored Ulva, and the darker Gometra, and the black rocks of Inch Kenneth. Pale and spectral those further isles appeared to be, and only half visible through the quivering heat; while they kept changing their forms, too, in an inexplicable fashion, as the steamer clove its way onward across this basking sea.

The Macleans and Allan did not care to land at Staffa (the councillor, of course, did, to impart further information to those artless folk); they remained on board the steamer; and when the captain had left the bridge, he came along to Allan, with whom he was acquainted; and for a little while these two paced up and down the empty deck.

"And so you've made your choice at last, Jessie," said the little widow, "and I hope you'll not repent."

"I am not likely to do that, mother," Jess replied, very quietly, as her eye followed the schoolmaster's tall figure. "I know what the nature of that man is. I have seen him tried as few men have been tried; and I know him—better than I do myself, I believe."

"Very well, then," rejoined the little widow, boldly, "I will say this now: if you are so finely satisfied, it would be but wise-like of you to keep a more civil tongue in your head. The poor lad!—doing everything to please you; and any one can see he thinks there's just none in the world like you; and yet you must go scoff-scoffing at him——"

"It's for his good, mother!" Jess cried—

with the grey eyes beginning to laugh again. "Allan goes through his life in a kind of dream, and he must be wakened up now and again——"

"And I will tell you this as well, Jessie," the mother continued, with unusual warmth, "if you could see the difference in your own appearance since all this affair was settled—for happiness seems to agree with you, as it does with most people when it comes to them—and alters their looks too, and none for the worse—I say you would not put such a light value on what has happened to you, and risk it with that sharp tongue of yours. The poor lad!—he has not enough to say for himself. I think if he would take a stick to you, you would be all the better for it."

"Mother," said Jess, "that comes after marriage. You are in too great a hurry."

At this point Allan himself returned to them.

"The captain is asking if you would like to have the gig and a couple of the hands to row you into the cave."

"Me?" cried the widow. "Na, na! More than once I've been into that cave with the weather as smooth and as fine as this, and all the same the ground-swell was coming

thundering in as if it would rive the very island in pieces. Na, na, Allan, lad, I am well content where I am."

"Jessie," said he, next, "would you like to try steering a steamer?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" she answered eagerly, jumping to her feet.

"Come along to the wheel, then."

And so Jess proceeded to try the strength of her arms on those stiff-revolving mahogany spokes, watching the stem of the great vessel slowly incline this way or the other—while far in the distance the people who had landed could be seen like small black ants making their way along the broken basaltic columns.

They did, however, land at Iona; for the Macleans had some friends on the island; and with them they spent the interval of waiting. Then they re-embarked and continued their voyage; and now the wandering breaths of wind had steadied into a light breeze from the south, so that the sea was of a deep sapphire as they passed between the red rocks lying off the Ross of Mull. All the southern ocean indeed was of the same vivid and troubled hue; and when at last they came in sight of Colonsay the distant line of land was a mere film of neutral tint beyond

the solid and darkened mass of water. 'Colonsay, ah, Colonsay!'—the piteous cry of the dying student came back to Allan's mind. And then again—'If only MacNeil had known Jess!'

But when they had got over towards Kerrara they entered once more upon a region of calms; and as they were steaming homewards through the Sound the water around them was like glass. Thus it was that they rapidly overtook a large schooner yacht that had been visible for some time, waiting helpless for any favouring puff of air. Very pretty she looked, with her tall spars, her breadth of cream-white canvas, and her booms lying out; and naturally she was an object of interest to those on board the steamer. Besides the red-capped crew there appeared to be only two people on deck, a young man who, as the *Grenadier* approached, kept his binocular glass almost constantly to his eyes, and a young lady, dressed in a smart yachting costume, who now and again addressed a word to him. Then, as the steamer came up, he was seen to hand the binocular to his companion, while he himself took out his handkerchief and waved it to some one on board the passing vessel.

“Jess,” said Allan, quickly and in considerable surprise, “that’s Mr. Caird! He did not say he was to be here so soon——”

And that other—the young lady whose peaked cap of blue cloth displayed to advantage a shapely head of light brown and curly hair? Well, Allan did not recognise her. And yet—even in this rapid second or two of furtive scrutiny—there seemed to be something familiar?—surely he had seen somewhere before that slim, graceful, not over-tall figure?—the movement of her arm as she lowered and handed back the glasses had a strange suggestion in it--And then he knew.

It was Pauline.

THE END.

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